

THEATRE AS A WAY OF DISCOVERING COMMON GROUND
BETWEEN SEPARATE ETHNIC AND CULTURAL GROUPS.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Chapter 1	60
Chapter 2	103
Chapter 3	152
Conclusion	164
Appendix	168
Bibliography	184

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Abstract

Theatre theorists and practitioners around the world have taken on the challenge of developing strategies for bringing diverse peoples together through the use of a range of activities and techniques, many culminating in public performances designed to celebrate a new or restructured sense of community.

Starting from the foundation provided by Victor Turner, whose ideas of social drama and *communitas* are essential to this research, the author looks at some of the theorists and practitioners — in particular, Dorothy Heathcote and Augusto Boal— who have worked in this area, in order to explore their ideas and methods for using theatre for social change. The work of these theorists and practitioners helped the author to develop a theatrical model that could be employed for her own project. This thesis culminates in an analysis of the work done to produce a community-based performance and to propose, as a result, a model for approaching this sort of work in the future.

I do not want my house to be walled in on all
sides and my windows to be stifled. I want all
the cultures of all lands to be blown about my
house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be
blown off my feet by any. (Fischer, 1997, 124)

Introduction

This thesis came about as a consequence of my experiences of working in two New Zealand schools: Ashburton College and Hillmorton School. It was lunchtime at Ashburton College, when I was on duty: I passed a rowdy bunch of Pacific Islanders, I noticed the Japanese students huddled together as they brushed past me and I walked towards a close knit group of young white Zimbabweans heavily involved in an animated conversation in Afrikaans. I was surrounded by all these different groups of people who had come together from around the world to Ashburton that sits in the middle of the Canterbury plains. They were all students at the school where I taught drama and were expected to become New Zealanders; Kiwis.

None of these pockets of students from the different countries had a specific forum to address their needs or to acknowledge the richness of their experiences, and how their presence may influence the local

culture. The demarcation between the various groups seemed fixed and confrontational. Teachers and other students would refer to groups of students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds using collective nouns, such as ‘them’ or ‘that lot’ rather than referring to them as individuals. There seemed to be no real platform for communication between individual students as representatives of a cultural or diverse group. Yet there remained an implicit assumption that these students would somehow engage equally with each other and their teachers, within the framework of the school. They were expected to do this without much acknowledgment or understanding of the different languages, experiences, customs and expectations they brought with them: a view that seemed to be reflected within the wider local population of an underlying expectation that migrants would be assimilated into the local culture with no corresponding adaptation or alteration to the status quo. How might the theatre serve to create a platform for these young people to exchange ideas about themselves and their home cultures with each other and, together, discover ways of becoming part of their new culture without losing the integrity of what they had left behind?

The question of how theatrical encounters might create possible platforms for communication between polyethnic and multicultural groups continued to be relevant when I moved to Hillmorton High School, which was a much smaller school of approximately 600 students. Whilst the student body was more culturally diverse, there

were still clear demarcations along ethnic and cultural lines. At Hillmorton, staff had access to resources that appeared to be inclusive of the diverse learning preferences within the cultural and ethnic communities represented at the school. The access to these resources did not however prevent some violent clashes between groups of students who aligned themselves along ethnic and cultural clusters. Māori students fighting Pasifika and Muslim students, in my experience, were the most common divisions.

There are many historical precedents that offer evidence of how rapid social change can create stress within a community. Being brought up in the UK during the 1970s and '80s, I am sensitive to the potential dangers for a community that has difficulty adapting to rapid social change. Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968, which was delivered to the General Meeting of the West Midlands Conservative political Centre, was a defining moment in modern UK history. His speech criticised Commonwealth immigration to the UK, as well as new anti-discrimination legislation, predicting that the increase in immigration would ultimately destroy the very fabric and culture of traditional Britain. He was accused of legitimising racism and forced to resign. Not however before he had galvanised a large number of people who demonstrated their support by writing letters to protest his forced resignation, as well as organising marches and rallies. To these people, he was the voice that

represented their thoughts and fears about the loss of their cultural identity, homes and jobs.

The riots of the 1980s in the UK proved Powell to be correct in his prediction of violence, though there were other contributing factors such as economic stress at the time. One element was the failure to understand the complexities of negotiating a truly multicultural society. There was an assumption that ethnic and cultural groups within UK society would retain their own cultural practices within the framework of a national identity and a tacit agreement of a set of ideals based on a secular liberal democratic society.

These issues are very personal to me as I was in a mixed race marriage in my home country, England. The range of attitudes I experienced from people towards me and my husband made me sensitive to the issues surrounding cultural identity in the encounters between migrants and non-migrants. At that time I worked in a school in Sheffield where a large majority of students were migrants from Bangladesh. These children would recount their own experiences of racism from the local population. Two years later, working with a diverse group of migrants as a cultural outsider in the countries of Seychelles and New Zealand provided me with further opportunities to experience people's attitudes towards cultural outsiders, both as observer and recipient. Such experiences radicalised me enough that I wanted to research the issues surrounding cultural identity in the encounters between migrants and non-migrants, and consider whether

there was a possibility of finding common ground in a performative context. It was the experience of working in both of these schools—Seychelles Polytechnic and Tinsley Secondary School—in particular, together with my experience as a cultural outsider that prompted me to question how drama might prove to be a useful tool for developing common ground between young people in the changing face of New Zealand society.

At the heart of this thesis have been a number of theatrical experiments involving young people from a number of ethnic and cultural groups. Using my drama classes—firstly at Ashburton, and then Hillmorton—as case studies, I developed a range of theatrical experiments to address the question of how communities that appear to be monocultural can be aided in the transition to cultural pluralism through the theatrical experience. As a drama teacher, I set up exercises through which young people could explore issues that were important to them using techniques and exercises developed by previous practitioners in this field. These exercises were designed to investigate the theatre’s potential to be used as a way of developing new experiences that were common to the separate ethnic and cultural groups living in New Zealand; to establish common ground. This thesis is at least as much about failure as it is about success, and my resulting experiences of both that subsequently inform my thinking.

In his book *Multicultural Citizenship*, Will Kymlicka, Professor of Philosophy and Canada Research Chair in Political Philosophy at

Queen's University at Kingston, defines culture as a reference 'to the distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group association' (1995, 18). I will be using this definition throughout my thesis as it suggests that culture is created through patterns of behaviour rather than through ethnicity or geographical location. Kymlicka explains how historically, New Zealand has struggled with a heritage based on the monoculturalist policies of the early colonists who 'aimed to reproduce their original society in a new land' (15).

Kymlicka uses the term 'Anglo-conformity' to explain the origins of such ingrained assumptions, 'Assimilation was seen as essential for political stability, and was further rationalised through ethnocentric denigration of other cultures' (14). The assimilationist attitudes of the white hegemonic community of Ashburton seem to hold the same assumption of 'Kiwi-conformity' towards its new migrants. Modern government policy has an emphasis on preserving Māori rights and presence, (both culturally and physically) so that New Zealand can identify itself as a bicultural society. Ashburton has a majority group who live in an area of New Zealand that does not represent a bicultural society. The rights of Māori are not necessarily perceived as relevant to the white majority in this region. As such, the diversity of migrants would seem to be even more problematic for a community that appears to define and experience itself as an Anglo-conformist monocultural community.

There is increasing evidence to suggest that the population of Ashburton is undergoing a cultural shift. In 2013, The Press newspaper carried an article entitled *Canty figures of speech reveal trends*, (Gates and Pearson, 2013) which highlighted the changing nature of Ashburton, estimating that 5% of the population in Ashburton at that time were Filipino. Tagalog, a language from the Philippines, now has enough speakers in Ashburton to make it the fastest growing language in Canterbury. 'The number of Tagalog speakers in Canterbury has more than quadrupled from 813 in 2006 to 3348, according to the latest census data released this week.' How this cultural shift has impacted the local population is still unclear. Currently there is no published evidence that research using theatrical encounters has been performed to explore any cultural shift. It is becoming apparent that there is increasing pressure upon the cultural hegemony in communities such as Ashburton to respond positively to the cultural changes in New Zealand. As this community becomes increasingly polyethnic, it will need to find methods of dealing with such unprecedented change to avoid the potential risk of an increase in race-based violence.

In this thesis I will argue that the methods used in the creation of the theatrical experience are most compatible with the creation of opportunities for dialogic encounters between the different cultural and ethnic voices of young people in communities such as Ashburton. Employing Kymlicka's definition of culture suggests that these

cultural differences may then be restructured to create dialogic moments of common ground. Kymlicka's definition also suggests that there are many groups that have their own cultures which are not necessarily defined by ethnic origin, religion or gender. Seen this way, even a community that would appear monocultural is made up of a wide range of cultures, for example, through shared hobbies, age-related events and volunteer work.

Increasing an apparently monocultural community's awareness of its own diversities may allow people within it to accept a broader range of cultures, whilst remaining secure in their own cultural identity. I hope to show that when members of a community perceive diversity among themselves, they are more able to recognise diversity in other groups. When members from diverse ethnic and cultural groups come together to engage in practical theatre experimentation, I hope that they might find moments of shared interests, experiences or viewpoints. These moments, no matter how brief, might then signal a way for developing common ground. By using theatre as the platform in which these encounters occur, I hope that each participant will subsequently remain secure within their own culture whilst developing an awareness of the culture of others, in an effort to find common ground.

How the literature of previous practitioners has informed my practice

For this thesis I have examined the work of previous practitioners and theorists whose work in this area is well recognised, notably Augusto Boal, the noted Brazilian theatre revolutionary and activist, and Dorothy Heathcote, the drama educationalist—both of whom advocated the use of theatre as a tool to explore social and cultural issues—so that I may create a model to use in my project. The exercises, (many of which are already in use as part of the drama curriculum in New Zealand and elsewhere) drew upon personal experiences, interviewing and storytelling to devise scenes. These scenes were then developed into performances that the participants shared with the communities in which they found themselves. This practice-based research has allowed me to expand and deepen the way I perform in my role as a high school drama teacher where, as a rule, I am expected to set up exercises and work with students to devise and develop performances. As such, it has formed the basis for proposing new ways to work within my own community. The research involved in the thesis deepened my understanding of how to facilitate engagement between separate ethnic and cultural groups in a theatrical context. Ultimately, the whole process will allow me to identify potentially effective methods to encourage dialogue within and between different ethnic and cultural groups in future. This thesis

presents the results of my investigation and suggests how I might continue the experimental research project as I work with different ethnic and cultural groups outside of New Zealand.

The introduction to this thesis covers seven areas. The first area discusses the theories of ‘praxis’ in education developed by Paulo Freire, the revolutionary Brazilian educator famous for his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It will explore how theatre can deepen learning opportunities through the development of critical pedagogy for the participants. I will also define what I mean by ‘common ground’.

The second area will explore the link between Freire’s work and that of Augusto Boal, who identified theatre’s potential as an ideal platform for raising socio-political awareness through the Praxis Model. Boal built his theory and practice, which we find outlined in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, on his understanding of Freire’s theory of critical pedagogy. The techniques explained in Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* and *Rainbow of Desire* form the basis of my assertion of the importance of working in the world of role and play for participants to perceive identity and culture.

The third section will also introduce the work of J.L. Moreno, the founder of Psychodrama, and pioneer of group psychotherapy. It will show how many of the theories developed by Moreno support Freire’s arguments about praxis and culture. It will also acknowledge the apparent tensions created between Moreno’s view of role and

spontaneity with that of Boal's, however later in this chapter I will discuss how these tensions appear to be resolved in later models of *Theatre of the Oppressed* and Psychodrama.

The following section considers the importance of the theories of anthropologist Victor Turner to the formation of a practical theatrical experimental model. In *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Turner explored how some forms of drama occupy a conceptual space that lies outside the norms of society. I will argue that it is the space that theatre occupies that makes it most appropriate for the exploration of common ground between different ethnic and cultural groups. Turner went on to identify the transformative nature of theatre, which is a belief shared by Boal and Moreno.

It is this transformative quality that will lead me to discuss the work of Jill Dolan in the fifth section. In her book, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*, Dolan suggests that 'theatre is specifically suited to transforming multiple audiences' attitudes towards other cultural perspectives.

Next, the sixth section will introduce the ideas of drama educationalists Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. In her book *Collected Writings on Education and Drama*, Dorothy Heathcote emphasised the importance of role and play within the drama classroom to stimulate authentic learning. Gavin Bolton in his book, *Drama as Education: an Argument for Placing Drama at the Centre*

of the Curriculum advocated using the process of learning within drama as a tool for students to access other areas of the educational curriculum. I will explain the implications of their work for me as a drama teacher and how their theories concerning drama in education corroborate the theoretical approaches of Boal, Turner and Moreno.

In the final section of this thesis introduction, I will explore some examples of how theatre has been used to help communities in crisis. Beginning with the work of noted performance artist and scholar Anna Deavere Smith, who developed a style of documentary theatre that allowed her to take on multiple roles of a community in crisis, I will then discuss how Playback Theatre situates itself between drama therapy and drama performance, and the implications this may have on a project such as my own. I will also compare the work of Jim Moriarty through his company *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu (Te Rakau)*, which works within a specific community in New Zealand, to the research projects of David Diamond and Jan Cohen Cruz, who have developed community theatre projects in a range of countries. From these and other contemporary sources, I will discuss what the implications may be for my project when attempting to create a model that may serve in New Zealand and beyond.

Freire's theories of Praxis Model in education

It was Paulo Freire who introduced the revolutionary principles of critical pedagogy in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He

suggested that if students in oppressed societies were given the opportunity to learn using the Praxis Model, they would have the skills to recognise their own oppression and the means to remove it, thus transforming their society. The Praxis Model in education would ‘investigate people’s thinking about reality, and peoples actions upon reality, which is their praxis’ (1970, 87) by using an action and reflection cycle of learning. The inclusive nature of the reflection section allows both the teacher and students to assess their level of understanding. It also creates a platform where a range of viewpoints concerning each learning activity can be shared. The end of each action and reflection cycle then becomes the foundation for the group’s next moment of praxis. Freire explains that his critical pedagogy is dissimilar from the ‘banking concept of education’ model (53) as it requires the teacher to work alongside the group as facilitator for their learning rather than as omnipotent provider of predetermined knowledge. It is for this reason that I wished to include Freire’s model in my own project, to show how the Praxis Model would help participants develop their meta learning; in other words, critical thinking about how they learn. Once students can assess what influences their own thinking and the thinking of others, then they can begin to look at their own cultural responses critically. Working in Praxis would also invite multiple viewpoints to be held in equal regard, encouraging participants to think critically about their own perceptions and assumptions about culture. Learning in such a

cooperative, informed manner would provide a rehearsal for the process of creating theatre together. I hoped that this would lead to the discovery of common ground.

The term ‘common ground’ in this thesis is similar to, but not the same as, the concept described by Paulo Freire as ‘cultural synthesis’. Cultural synthesis is the process for transforming the relationship between the leaders and the workers in a society which ‘does not deny the differences between the two views; indeed it is based on these differences. It does deny the invasion of one by the other, but affirms the undeniable support each gives the other’ (162). Freire is suggesting a social pluralism which allows autonomy whilst maintaining separate identities. These identities are distinct and equal. Freire’s definition suggests that there is a way to work that avoids assimilation by creating a new culture:

When the creation of a new culture is appropriate but impeded by interiorised cultural ‘residue’, this residue, the myths, must be expelled by means of culture. [He suggests that] learners must discover the reasons behind many of their attitudes toward cultural reality and thus confront cultural reality in a new way. [...] The learners’ capacity for critical knowing—well beyond mere opinion—is established in the process of unveiling their relationships with the historical-cultural world in and with which they exist.’ (35)

Freire is referring to the cultural structures developed around a socio-economic status quo that have served to endorse oppression. Working in this manner Freire suggests the realisation of a new culture by removing old cultural identities and their associated oppressions. I do not suggest that such a revolutionary approach is necessary to find common ground. Nor do I suggest creating a globalised culture. However, in this thesis I will argue that 'culture' as we know it today has evolved into its current traditions and thought processes in the same way that identity and the roles that we assume on a daily basis evolve to suit our changing situations.

If culture is a group of 'distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group association', (following Kymlicka's definition) which are in a state of constant flux, then one's culture can also be in flux. Moreno explains the identity of self as being made up of a series of roles that fluctuate over time serving a specific purpose: 'A role, after it has served for a period in a certain function, may vanish [. . .] It becomes a matrix from which a new role may draw strengthening support' (Fox, 2008, 75). If our identity is formed by a series of roles that change throughout our lives, then how we identify ourselves can also be changed. Identity and roles within a culture are therefore always changing and evolving with the people who are in that culture, dependent on the needs of the group. If that is the case then there is reason to argue that the evolution of culture can continue; for example in the theatre.

This thesis will record my attempts to find common ground in the theatre from a post-colonial perspective. Whilst it is important to acknowledge the influence of colonisation as an oppressive cultural force in the past, (and its influence on our daily thinking) there is also the need to recognise that oppressive cultural action occurs from one group towards another, outside the white hegemonic framework. Seen in this way culture can be viewed as a continuum between the oppressor and the oppressed dependent on the situation and the roles each member of a culture finds them self in. The model of culture as a continuum made up of changing roles resembles Boal's continuum of social oppression in his *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

Using a range of theatrical experiments I will attempt to create a model of theatre where participants can view themselves and others within their own cultural roles, explore the reality of these roles and how they serve to create their view of the world. Working in this manner I hope that participants will find common ground exploring what links us; our differences, hopes and fears, in essence, our humanity. We will examine how traditions formed to deal with the human condition and if they still hold relevance today.

The Praxis Model developed by Freire will form the rationale behind the thinking processes for the practical theatrical explorations. I hope that Praxis will provide an educative opportunity for participants and any possible audiences to reflect on their own cultural roles.

Boal's use of the Praxis Model in theatre

The presentation of the practical theatrical explorations within my practice is modelled on the 'Image Theatre' method created by Augusto Boal. Boal believed that theatre provided the optimal learning environment to develop Friere's Praxis Model for social revolution. In his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal proposed that the nature of how theatre functions for an actor working in role is to provide the moment of action and reflection simultaneously within that role, he referred to this as 'the phenomenon of Metaxis: the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image' (1985, 43). By recognising the power of metaxis as a state of learning, then any image created by an actor had the potential to be transformed into a new 'reality': 'Theater is change and not simple presentation of what exists: it is becoming and not being' (28). When applied to citizens who were ruled by oppressive regimes the transformative power of these images became the catalyst for social revolution. In his later work *The Rainbow of Desire* Boal explains how he adapts Image Theatre to educate participants to resolve their own internalised oppressions in western democracies:

The oppressed creates *images of his reality*. Then he must play with the *reality of those images*. ... He must make an extrapolation from his social reality towards

the reality which is called fiction, (towards theatre, towards image) and, having played with the image, he must make a second extrapolation, now in the inverse direction, towards the social reality which is his world. *He practises in the second world (the aesthetic), in order to modify the first (the social).* ' (1995, 44)

This is at the heart of Boal's Image Theatre, where the concretising of thoughts and emotions allow an individual to confront her oppressions and explore theatrically possible solutions. Once the participant could 'see' her oppression, then she could modify it, both on stage and in her mind. The new image would reflect the new reality.

By applying Image Theatre techniques to my workshops I hoped that participants would create images reflecting their own cultural perceptions about traditions and living in New Zealand. The development of these images could then be shared with the group to provide opportunities for discussion. As Adrian Jackson states in his introduction to Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*:

The polysemy of images is a vital factor in this work; a group of individuals will perceive a whole range of different, but often intriguingly related, meanings within a single image, often seeing things which the sculptors had no idea were there. Images work across language and culture barriers and, as Boal shows,

frequently reveals unexpected universalities. (1992, p
xxiii)

It is my hope that in my practical theatrical explorations, participants, who are from a range of cultural and ethnic groups, might also create images that ‘reveal unexpected universalities’. These images would then provide the catalyst for discussions that would provide a platform for common ground.

Another concept developed by Boal that I wish to explore for my thesis is his creation of ‘Forum Theatre’ as a problem solving tool for audiences to use. Boal believed that if an audience could be given a role, then they could contribute and learn just as much from a theatrical performance as the actors performing. In Forum Theatre ‘any participant in the audience has the right to replace any actor and lead the action in the direction that seems to him most appropriate’ (1985, 139). Boal named this audience role ‘spectator-actors’ (141).—‘subjects, actors, transformers of the dramatic action’ (122) to describe the new dynamic relationship an audience was to have with the performance on stage.

In his book *The Rainbow of Desire*, Boal envisions the way all participants involved in the creation of theatre would together as a community be ‘turning the practice of theatre into an effective tool for the comprehension of social and personal problems and the search for their solutions’ (1995, 14). It has to be acknowledged that there is a marked difference to the communities Boal worked with and those

that I intended to work with in Ashburton. Boal worked with essentially homogeneous groups who shared similar desires to remove extreme social and political oppression. I was trying to work in a community which is characterised by one homogeneous group that holds most of the power and which has yet to acknowledge the perceptions and ideas of smaller, more diverse groups who have moved into their area. I hoped to show that if theatre can be used as a platform to explore social and personal problems with an audience, then it can also be used to explore cultural issues and perceptions with an audience together as a community.

Moreno's theories around role

The question now arises about how I intend to increase awareness around cultural issues and perceptions in a community that may not be interested. For this I hoped to take the methods developed by J.L. Moreno, the founder of Psychodrama. Augusto Boal used therapeutic exercises in a dramatic context to raise social and political awareness within a group with the intention of removing oppression as a social system. J.L. Moreno used theatrical exercises in a therapeutic context to encourage change in individuals as a means to reintegrate them back into society.

Boal's use of Image Theatre works from the premise that participants can identify that they are suffering from oppression, however Moreno's patients were not always so cognisant about their

own mental health issues. In order to facilitate a patient's understanding of their own perceptions, Moreno developed a series of exercises using role-play and spontaneity which he applied as an exploratory therapeutic tool for psychiatric patients to recreate how they perceived the world around them. Moreno defined spontaneity as something that, 'propels the individual towards an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation' (2008, 42). In *The Theatre of Spontaneity* he explains the importance of spontaneity as diagnostic tool and a healing method:

Life is the soul's breathing in, spontaneity its breathing out.

Through breathing in, poisons (conflicts) emerge; through spontaneity they are released. Spontaneity lets the unconscious (with the help of the conscious) emerge unharmed. This process is achieved without interference from outside; its importance as a cure is based on this. (1970, 96)

Whilst I am not suggesting that communities such as Ashburton need 'curing', I do believe that they may not have developed an awareness of the polysemy of perceptions and cultural beliefs that new migrants bring with them. If I could introduce a range of exercises that developed spontaneity in my theatrical explorations, this might provide an opportunity for an exploration around these differing views within the context of a theatrical platform.

Moreno, like Boal, chose to base his methods within a theatrical framework because of the reflective quality provided for both his audience and patients. He discovered that his patients responded in a profound way to 'seeing' their realities recreated using a range of drama techniques. Fox's book *The Essential Moreno: Writings on Psychodrama, Group method and Spontaneity* contains a description of Moreno's mirror technique, which he developed to train a patient 'to see himself more objectively, much as in a mirror, and he learns, from watching the auxiliary ego, how to act in better relation to the realities' (Fox, 2008, 77).

The Mirror Technique performs a similar function to Boal's use of metaxis in the performer and spectator-actor in an audience member. Moreno's patient sees himself in role on stage in his reality and from this, can rehearse solutions himself or suggest them to the nurse representing him on stage. Moreno defines role:

as the actual and tangible forms which the self takes. We thus define role as the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved... Every role has two sides, a private and a collective side. (65)

Moreno's definition of role is important as it suggests that identity is performed. As such, identity is fluid and not fixed. In conceiving of role in this way, Moreno also seems to suggest that there is a cultural component to identity that can be transformed. If an individual

already functions in society as a series of roles, then the idea of playing roles in a performance space to see how one functions in society would seem to have value. If identity is fluid this would also suggest that change in perceptions can occur within role, which would then be transferrable to the roles played in society. As role is partially determined by cultural influences, then it should be possible for these roles to be observed as separate from the individuals who are displaying them. Moreno explains the identity of self as being made up of a series of roles that may last for a long time or briefly to serve a specific purpose: ‘A role, after it has served for a period in a certain function, may vanish[. . .] It becomes a matrix from which a new role may draw strengthening support’ (75). If our identity is formed by a series of roles that change throughout our lives, then how we identify ourselves can also be changed. If culture is a group of ‘distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group association’, (following Kymlicka’s definition) which are in a state of constant flux, then one’s culture can be in flux also. If one’s sense of culture can be in flux, then it is open to change.

Moreno then goes on to suggest that these roles can become calcified and habitual, and described them as ‘cultural conserves’ (41). Spontaneity training was his answer to developing mental, social and emotional flexibility in his patients, ‘through spontaneity training a subject becomes relatively freer from conserves –past or future–than he was previous to the training’ (42). Using

spontaneity exercises, Moreno could educate a patient to be aware of how ‘certain invisible dimensions in the reality of living, not fully experienced or expressed’ (7), could influence his perceptions of reality. Moreno referred to these exercises as ‘surplus realities’. Once a patient became aware of his surplus realities, he was then able to release those which had been no longer beneficial; the ‘cultural conserves’. This thesis will argue that if identity is performed and fluid, then it is the manipulation of role through methods such as spontaneity training that is central to the theatre’s possibilities as an effective vehicle for the exploration and reconciliation of diverse cultural identities.

Victor Turner’s theories about liminal space in the theatre

Throughout the work of Moreno there is recognition of the stage occupying a special space separate from ordinary life:

The living space of reality is often narrow and
restraining [. . .] The stage space is an extension of life
beyond the reality test of life itself. Reality and fantasy
are not in conflict, but both are functions within a
wider sphere – the psychodramatic world of objects,
persons, and events.’ (Moreno, 1946, 249)

It is this blending of fantasy and reality that occurs in a theatre space which permits participants to experiment with possible solutions within the safety of that space. Boal makes the same observation

about the theatre space allowing a participant to ‘extrapolate into his real life the actions he has rehearsed in the practice of theatre’ (1985, 40).

The special nature of theatre is explained in depth by Victor Turner. In *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Turner examined how some forms of drama function as a conceptual space that lie outside the norms of society. He referred to this conceptual space as a ‘liminal space’, an ‘area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo which has few of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states’ (1982, 24).

A liminal space provides a greater degree of freedom to express ideas that may ordinarily be suppressed in a particular society. The reasons for suppression may be based on a pervading political, social, religious or moral ideology of the ruling hegemony. Because theatre occupies a space that sits within this marginal threshold, it gives us licence to play outside the normal rules of society. As Turner explains it; ‘The theatre space is a space of transformation, separation and the dissolution of normative social structure’ (28). It is the marginal nature of a *liminal* space that makes it an appropriate platform to explore issues surrounding cultural perceptions for a group made up of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Outside of the belief systems of communities such as Ashburton, a group of participants would have the opportunity to examine issues about identity within and outside different ethnic and cultural groups. If any ‘unexpected universalities’

(Boal xxiii), or common ground occurs, then the implications of these discoveries may transfer into real life as suggested by the work of both Boal and Moreno. Whereas Moreno suggests using the psychodramatic space to examine the roles played by his patients in their daily experiences, Turner makes a similar observation about the function of the theatrical space:

Since social dramas suspend normal everyday role playing, they interrupt the flow of social life and force a group to take cognisance of its own behaviour in relation to its own values, even to question at times the value of those values. (92)

Turner's observation of how drama works within a liminal space is similar to the theories presented by Moreno. Turner suggests that roles can be analysed in far more depth when they are explored outside ordinary life, which is what a liminal space provides. My intention, based on Turner's observation, is to create a range of theatrical experiments where participants can view themselves and others within their own cultural roles would benefit if it were set in a liminal space. The theatre space, as a liminal space, would provide the necessary distance from ordinary life, (social dramas) to allow for an exploration of these roles.

Finally I wish to examine Turner's reasoning on the effect a live theatrical performance can have on a live and physically present audience. He asserted that the involvement of an audience can create

heightened moments of togetherness, which he termed 'spontaneous communitas'. These transformational moments are when, 'Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous communitas become totally absorbed into a single synchronised, fluid event' (48). Having experienced such an event together in such a unique moment would, he argued, lead to each participant feeling a link, a sense of community with his fellow audience members. In his paper *Mental Catharsis and Pyschodrama*, Moreno refers to Aristotle's definition of Catharsis, and the emotional connection felt amongst audience members as they watched a drama production:

Catharsis, as a concept, was introduced by Aristotle.

He used this term to express the peculiar effect of the Greek drama upon its spectators. In his 'Poetics' he maintains that drama tends to purify the spectators by artistically exciting certain emotions which act as a kind of homeopathic relief from their own selfish passions. (1940, 209)

Aristotle was aware of how influential watching a drama performance could be on an audience member. Moreno states that the notion of Catharsis has evolved from the time of Aristotle into something that acknowledges the effect drama can also have on the performer. Moreno suggests that Psychodrama allows both actors and audience, a cathartic release, 'It (the Psychodrama) produces a healing effect -- not in the spectator (secondary catharsis) but in the producer-actors

who produce the drama and at the same time, liberate themselves from it' (Moreno quoting himself, *The Spontaneity Theatre* (Das Stegreiftheater), 1923, 209). For Moreno, it is this healing effect of performing drama that is the basis of his work within Psychodrama. He primarily uses the patient as audience of their own work to liberate them self. He also shows awareness of the liberating effect witnessing such events can have on his spectators as the secondary catharsis.

It was the 'selfish' nature of this emotional response to theatre that Boal challenged in his *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal argued that catharsis held a 'repressive function' (1985, 25) within a coercive state system. He argued that by radicalising the audience into 'spectator-actors' (141) who determined the actions in a play, the cathartic response would evolve into a directed, social-intellectual catharsis rather than a simple emotional release. This moving away from the selfish emotional response to a collective social response is what would lead the way to social revolution.

The suggestion that a theatrical process has a transformative quality for the participants and audience as they bear witness to a performance in which they are directly implicated is significant for my theatre experiments. Turner's definition of *communitas* supports both Moreno's use of an audience as part of therapeutic treatment, and Boal's creation of spectator-actors. All three theorists suggest that it is the importance of how drama makes connections, from the world of the individual to the global realm that makes drama such a powerful

transformative tool. It may not be necessary to invite an audience to be part of the action; simply watching a theatrical event may provide moments of *communitas*, which, I will argue could be seen as ‘moments’ of common ground.

Jill Dolan’s utopian theory about theatre

Jill Dolan, author of *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* suggests that theatre provides a space for different cultural and ethnic groups to perform, and an audience with opportunities to see what a society that was created from different cultural and ethnic groups might look like:

Performing across cultural identities in the formalised space of theatre might provoke utopian performatives that offer glimpses of how people might be together in a more respectful, care-full, loving human community, however small or large those configurations might be.
(2005, 64)

Dolan suggests that such experiences can offer a glimpse of something even more aspirational, a glimpse of how much better society could be. For Dolan, simply watching the theatrical performances is enough for an audience to be receptive to the possibilities of alternative social narratives regardless of whether they are oppressed, mentally ill or otherwise socially disenfranchised.

Dolan states that these moments of spontaneous *communitas* that

occur within liminal performances, ‘show us what can be done to practice, physically, interpretations of culture that might model radically altered social communities and point through utopian performatives, to a revised and reanimated understanding of humanism’ (70). She uses the term ‘humanism’ based on a post-modern interpretation of humanism, by this I mean inclusive of any culture, whatever an individual’s ‘distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group association’ (Kymlicka, 1995, 18).

If what Dolan suggests is correct and theatre can help transform society across cultural divides simply through its influence on an audience, then I hope that my theatrical experiments might also provide opportunities for people of different ethnic and cultural groups to glimpse future possibilities within communities such as Ashburton.

The theories of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton around Drama in Education

So far I have explored practitioner-theorists within the theatrical realm. In the next part of my introduction I will discuss the importance of practitioner theorists from the field of education.

Whilst Boal and Moreno developed models that operated within the theatrical and therapeutic fields respectively, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton were developing similar ideas in their educational pedagogies. As a drama teacher it was important to me that the

resulting practice-based research informed my own pedagogy. The work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton provided me with a further opportunity to identify effective methods to encourage dialogic encounters within the classroom.

Dorothy Heathcote developed her holistic approach to learning, (which placed dramatic inquiry within imagined worlds) as the basis for learning the entire curriculum. In her book *Collected writings on Education and Drama*, Heathcote emphasised the importance of role. In his book, *Drama as Education: an Argument for Placing Drama at the Centre of the Curriculum*, Gavin Bolton advocated using the process of learning within drama as a tool for students to access other areas of the educational curriculum. Their work falls under the umbrella term 'Process Drama'. Cecily O'Neill, an associate professor at the Ohio University who specialises in developing drama in education for teachers has worked both with Heathcote and Bolton's work. She defines Process Drama as, 'a complex dramatic encounter. Like other events, it evokes an immediate dramatic world bounded in space and time, a world that depends on the consensus of all those present for its existence' (O'Neill, 1995, xiii).

Similar to Boal and Moreno, O'Neill is suggesting that Process Drama functions as a group activity through the manipulation of role. All members agree to perform this role in a world that is both fantasy and reality, as if this world exists. In this way Process Drama acts as a

negotiated space that sits outside the boundaries of society; a liminal space.

Dorothy Heathcote created the frame of ‘Mantle of the Expert’ to deliver the entire educational curriculum through the framework of drama to encourage students to engage with their own learning. Her framework provided students with a role, which she referred to as a ‘mantle’ of a caring expert to help solve the problems of a fictional ‘man in a mess’:

Participants in mantle of the expert are framed as
servicers committed to an enterprise. This frame
fundamentally affects their relationship with
knowledge. They can never be mere receivers “told”
about knowledge. They can engage with its people
with a responsibility. This responsibility is not to
knowledge itself [...] but to the enterprise they have
undertaken. (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, 32)

Heathcote explained that her reason for creating the framework of Mantle of the Expert was that, ‘I needed a structure for authentic learning, even in an unauthentic establishment situation’ (Heathcote, 1984, 192). Her emphasis on authentic learning shares a common pedagogical goal with Freire’s development of praxis. The difference is that Freire suggested his critical pedagogy as a replacement to an oppressive education system, which would revolutionise students, educating them with the skills necessary to be free from oppression.

Heathcote's intention was to use drama in education within an established education system as 'a way of educating our children to be sensitive, aware, mature citizens, able not only to see the world from their own viewpoint, but through the eyes of others' (85). She recognised that the education system, with its emphasis on content driven curricula, was essentially 'unauthentic'. Her argument was that it was the power of problem solving whilst in role that created a sense of urgency that overrode the 'inauthentic' and provided context to the learning, therefore engaging students. Cecily O'Neill points out that Dorothy Heathcote is proposing what is, in effect, a paradox:

The teaching is authentic, and yet it achieves its authenticity through "the big lie," since it operates within a powerful imagined context, created through the inner dramatic rules of time, space, Role and situation. This contextualisation is the key to its effect. Thinking from within a situation immediately forces a different kind of thinking.' (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, vii)

Specific moments from the entire history of the human experience could be examined, explored and re-enacted whilst students remained in the safety of a classroom. Heathcote felt that role was particularly effective as a medium for teaching students not only about events and people outside their own experiences, but also for comprehending the ethical issues related to these people and events. She stated that:

Dramatic work is first of all a social art. In which the interaction of people comes under scrutiny in a specific encounter or matter of concern in which they are trapped. It spans all time, race, social strata, faiths, behaviours and feelings. Thus it is a mirror of society.

(Heathcote, 1984, 196, italics in original)

Heathcote used young children's ability to play in and out of role whilst maintaining awareness of both as the basis for creating her framework of critical reflection. This critical reflection entailed asking a series of questions that arose out of the work they explored in role. In this her work also parallels Boal's use of metaxis in that students would go into role to perform scenes and ideas, and then come out of role to reflect on what they created and what they felt they needed to learn next. Fundamental to Heathcote's theory was that the teacher also be in role to deepen the 'Mantle of the Expert' experience of the students. This enabled the teacher to assume a role that allowed them to work alongside, encouraging and directing students' thinking.

Heathcote's work suggests that there are opportunities to create moments of metaxis within a drama classroom that can be used as the basis for discussion and change. The use of 'Mantle of the Expert' offers a way of providing authentic learning for students. The creation of a dramatic world where problems are solved within role provides

the learning of skills that are transferrable outside the drama world and into the real one. For a secondary school drama teacher like me, the implication is that I can provide opportunities for authentic learning about different cultural perspectives within the drama classroom in such apparently monocultural communities as Ashburton. These learning opportunities may also provide moments where cultural identities are recognised and celebrated within a drama world. Such positive intercultural and ethnic exchanges may then be transferred outside the drama classroom, influencing the behaviour of the students concerned.

In his book *Drama as Education: an Argument for Placing Drama at the Centre of the Curriculum*, Gavin Bolton agrees with many of Dorothy Heathcote's philosophies. He also suggests drama as a tool to engage large sections of a curriculum. How Bolton differs from Heathcote is his emphasis on how drama operates as a subject that provides the depth of learning. For Bolton, the frame of drama dictates the need for interpersonal negotiation amongst students and their teachers, which is what drives the development of effective learning. Because 'the focus of attention in drama is [. . .] on the context to which the participant brings his 'whole self' (Bolton, 1984, 163). Rather than creating a frame like Heathcote's 'Mantle of the Expert', Bolton is suggesting that drama creates the frame or role that the student will work in, which engages them on an emotional,

physical and intellectual level, encouraging a deeper level of engagement. Bolton goes on to state that because of the nature of how students work in a drama classroom a situation is created where they have to show their ideas and be involved in negotiating meaning in their work:

what is individually known, understood can be socially tested and modified through the medium of public language and action [...] for the group interaction provides a continual counter-pull to subjectivism [...] ultimately, therefore the drama is concerned with engaging with something outside oneself.’(154)

Bolton is advocating a method of learning that has strong similarities with Boal’s use of Image Theatre. Bolton emphasises how role creates metaxis, ‘the interplay between the actual and the fictitious’ (141) to create effective learning. When a student is in role he is in a state of metaxis, he ‘acts and observes himself in action, shows and observes himself showing, speaks and listens to what he himself is saying’ (26).

As work in a drama classroom is viewed by all participants, they become aware of themselves in relation to others, and from this they learn how to negotiate their views and ideas within the group in a way that does not occur within ordinary social interaction: ‘Because it is a group enterprise, there is a natural striving towards ‘finding a public

voice', towards having one's feelings and thoughts publicly tested, towards collaborative meaning' (163). Bolton states that this negotiated learning which occurs whilst students are in role is what affects fundamental changes to the attitudes of the student: 'what drama does is to create an opportunity for coming to know something *from the inside* (154). Once again, these words can find a parallel in the work of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* and how a participant affects change from within. Bolton also makes similar observations to Turner about drama being a specific form of social interaction which involves a communal experience:

Drama is not about self-expression. It is a group's expression, concerned with celebrating what people share, what man has in common with man. When as audience is responding to a play they are identifying what they have in common with the human beings on stage. Drama is about similarities not differences, but of course by looking at similarities, differences might well be highlighted. (1979, 47)

Seen in this way, drama taught in the classroom that demands students go into role will provide opportunities for students to learn about that role from within the role, and in their interactions with others who are also assuming roles. As a drama teacher I can develop programmes

that assume a pedagogical focus surrounding issues about culture and identity that can be explored using role within the classroom.

Theatre for social purposes

Through the previous sections I have looked at a range of different concepts that will inform my practice in the rest of the study. Each section has focused on a different strand of thought which in summary are:

- Metaxis enabling image and reality to inform and modify each other
- Psychodrama using spontaneity to develop awareness of polysemy
- Theatre as special space and *communitas* providing suspension from everyday experience and catharsis and using those to create a platform for transformation
- Theatre informing and transforming by presenting possible worlds
- Using theatrical practices to transform the curriculum through

Process Drama

In this final section, I will explore some examples of how theatre has already been used to help communities in crisis using these above principles.

Whereas Moreno used role to help patients resolve mental or emotional dissonance and Boal used metaxis to help resolve societal oppression, Anna Deavere Smith, the performance artist and scholar, uses role to help resolve societal dissonance. These roles are direct representations of the views and opinions about an event that are then performed to an audience made up of the people from whom she had

drawn her performance. Her play ‘*Twilight*’ was created from the first-hand accounts of citizens who were directly affected by the riots in Los Angeles in 1992. She explains that her purpose was not to provide solutions to the problem, but to explore theatrically how those problems arose:

I am looking at the processes of the problems. Acting is a constant process of becoming something. It is not a result, it is not an answer. It is not a solution I am first looking for the humanness inside the problems, or the crises. The spoken word is evidence of the humanness (1992, xxiv).

Deavere Smith does not simply repeat her interviewees’ words; she mimics their cadences, speech patterns and delivery. Her movements and gestures stay true to the people she is representing on stage.

Deavere Smith developed her stage performance by interviewing a wide a range of individuals connected with an issue or event and then recreated their words and actions in performance, allowing them to bear witness through her on stage. Through her, (as the medium of the various viewpoints and opinions) Anna Deavere Smith is providing a platform for a community to see themselves in the context of being a community rather than as isolated individuals. The many roles she performs do not suggest solutions to her audiences. Her performances offer a myriad of viewpoints, (sometimes opposing, sometimes similar) to create a complex view of social and political issues that are

relevant to the particular crisis her audience is facing. Her use of theatre in this way comes from her belief that: ‘if more of us could actually speak from another point of view, like speaking another language, we could accelerate the flow of ideas’ (xxiv–xxv). Because she remains as the common element throughout the performance, it appears as if her identity is no longer fixed but has become fluid. She describes how she moves from one role to the next: ‘The spirit of acting is the *travel* from the self to the other’ (xxvi), in a manner that Richard Schechner, the professor and founder of Performance Studies, has described as a ‘form of shamanism’ (1993, 63). Schechner describes her as ‘incorporating’ the various people most involved and continues with a suggestion that this ‘incorporation’ (63) of roles through Deavere Smith has a transformational quality on the audience as they witness their society through their own words. Cherise Smith, in her book *Enacting Others: Politics of Identity in Eleanor Antin, Nikki S. Lee, Adrian Piper, and Anna Deavere Smith*, describes Deavere Smith’s purpose for this as rooted in the development of democratic principles:

Smith’s democratic ideal is to communicate universally across racial, ethnic, class, and professional divisions. She performs across racial and other identity-boundaries as a step toward reaching what she considers a democratic ideal, to discourage the notion of difference as opposites and to [. . .] she models for

audiences becoming the “other” temporarily. (2011,
136)

It is this transformational quality across boundaries of race and culture whilst in role that is relevant to my experimental research project. By crossing the threshold of different identities yet retaining the presence of herself as actor on stage, Anna Deavere Smith becomes a living example of a liminal space ‘Smith not only locates and embodies the liminal space in which identity is neither stable nor fixed, but she also models how to occupy the liminal space, encouraging her viewers to follow suit’ (Smith, 179). She becomes a living example of how this act of transformation into the ‘other’ can be achieved.

If I refer back to Moreno’s idea that identity is made up of many roles and these roles are in flux, then Deavere Smith’s incorporation of identities in performance demonstrates the link between understanding that identity is fluid and that the performing identity is fluid. Further to this is my argument that in the same way that identity is fluid, culture as an expression of this identity, is also fluid and subject to change. Boal, in his book *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, defines culture as ‘the *doing*, the *how it is done*, the *for what* and *for whom* it is done’ (2006, 100, italics in original). He is suggesting that our culture comes from the range of actions and interactions we are involved in, and that societal identity is under tension through constant change. Then these actions, (which come from sources other

than our own cultural and ethnic groups) can also affect change in our identities and in our societies.

In her book *Talk to Me: Listening between the Lines*, Deavere Smith refers to the lack of 'Cultural literacy' in American society (2000, 70). She says that whilst there is strong knowledge of the white hegemonic culture, there is limited reciprocal understanding of other diverse ethnic and cultural groups within America. She makes the point that the end of racial segregation in America should have meant an increase in cultural literacy:

And yet these people, who don't know us or anything about us [. . .] affect every aspect of our lives. They make decisions about our education, they are our surgeons, they are often our lawyers [. . .] they create our realities in body and mind' (70).

Deavere Smith argues that because the white and black cultural groups remain socially estranged without much interaction in day-to-day life, the white majority remain largely ignorant of the impact their decisions make on the various black Americans' cultures. Deavere Smith believes that theatre can help develop cultural literacy by depicting a more representative view of the various cultural and ethnic groups that make up America 'Theater can mirror society. But in order to do that theater must embrace diversity. It must include new characters in our human drama that have not been portrayed on our stages' (1992, xxi). Deavere Smith is suggesting that one of the

reasons for America's inability to reconcile its various cultural and ethnic identities as a nation is that it has not yet incorporated these many different identities as part of its national identity. Unlike her 'shamanistic role', (which stays in a state of flux allowing all voices a platform to be seen and heard) America is still struggling with providing this democratic ideal for all of its peoples. Dolan would argue that the one place where this democratic ideal can be shown is in the theatre.

From my own perspective, students in the classroom and the migrant newcomers in communities like Ashburton share a similar sense of alienation from the white cultural majority. If I could use theatre as a platform where the many roles that now reflect the increasingly diverse cultural and ethnic nature of a community could be viewed, then this may offer a glimpse of a the possibility of a society that has greater cultural literacy.

For the next part of this section I will look at how the writings of the major practitioner theorists I have chosen to study for this thesis still contribute to current theatre practice. In *'Performing the world: The Performance Turn in Social Activism'*, Dan Friedman and Louis Holzman describe how there has been a blending of the theories of Moreno and Boal to develop cultural awareness:

A growing number of political and social activists, community and youth organizers, progressive and critical educators and therapists, and others have been

turning to performance as a way of engaging social problems, activating communities and experimenting with new social and political possibilities. This shift is allowing social change activists in both modern and traditional cultures to organize, through performance, something new with what exists. The performance turn has the potential to be socially and culturally transformative/ revolutionary because, in our view, performance is a creative social activity that allows human beings to break out of old roles and old rules. (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994, 276)

Jim Moriarty, a social change activist in New Zealand, has created a theatre that combines the multiple voices of Māori youth and the Māori traditions of hui and marae. His purpose was to activate the Māori youth by empowering them through the use of theatre. 'In 1989 he co-established the Māori theatre company *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu (Te Rakau)* and the concept of theatre Marae' (2003, 57). Its aim was to allow Māori to bear witness to their own personal stories of neglect and abuse 'like parcelling up some perspective from Māoridom by Māori in a package that people could access in a theatre space' (61). Moriarty, (who originally trained as a psychiatric nurse) uses the direct experiences of the actors to create theatre:

It's about working in a way that encourages people to share their hurt, and from their hurt to create an

objectified theatrical narrative. Through the liberation of that hurt, you then see a performance that's about personal liberation. We still involve theatricality and production values that go with professional theatre but it's like-stories from the heart, really told by the informed heart that it's happened to ... It's a healing process, it's a wellness process" (65).

Moriarty's emphasis that each actor will dynamically engage in a healing process that confronts their demons echoes the purpose in the work of Boal and Moreno:

Do you want to change? Are you happy with your life? ... if you want to stay and have some fun and be supportive, and you're prepared to be willing, honest and open ... theatre as a transformation tool. We wrap it up in rituals tikanga [...] but what underpins it is a Māori spiritual self-belief system (63).

Moriarty's *Theatre Marae* seems more closely aligned with the ideas of Moreno and Boal than to Deavere Smith, with his focus on a particular community and its struggles in the context of the wider New Zealand society, using Māori voices to highlight the plight of a particular section of New Zealand society. Moriarty's use of audience as witness is similar to the way Moreno used his patients' audience as part of the healing process.

Recent research by such practitioners as Homi K Bhabha suggests that the space occupied by different cultures is constantly being negotiated. In his book *The Location of Culture*, he explains the liminality of this negotiation between different cultures as performative in function:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation (1994, 3, italics in originals).

I am suggesting that this idea of liminality can refer to a multiplicity of spaces where possible encounters that explore cultural identities, both within and outside one's own culture can occur, and furthermore, that these cultural encounters are in flux.

Within New Zealand, Janinka Greenwood, Associate Dean of Postgraduate Studies in Education at Canterbury University, has specialised in researching the special place Māori theatre inhabits in New Zealand culture and how this space can be negotiated with peoples from migrant nations. She calls this liminal space—where cultural renegotiation occurs specifically between Māori and Pakeha

—the ‘3rd space’. In her paper *Journeying into the Third Space: A Study of how Theatre can be used to interpret the Emergent Space between Cultures*, she uses:

The term *3rd space* as a descriptor of the nature of the space that comes into being as two cultures meet and interact. The first two spaces are occupied by Māori and Pakeha which may continue to keep their identity and tradition. The third comes into being as new ideas and new behaviours grow through the interaction.

What happens in that space is unscripted - it evolves out of dialogues, confrontations, accommodations, risk-taking and unplanned discoveries. It might be something we perceive as good or bad, but inescapably it engages with the development of something new. I conceptualized the space both in terms of social terrain and of opportunity. (2005, 4, italics in original)

Her idea of a 3rd space again supports my idea of the possibility of the creation of new cultural infrastructures. What I find most useful about this concept is how she defines the liminal space between the two cultures of Māori and Pakeha, and acknowledges the dialogic possibilities it can provide as a theatre space.

This echoes work of Hilary Halba, a lecturer at Otago University who teaches a course specialising in how bicultural identities can be performed in New Zealand. In *Performing Identity: Teaching*

Bicultural Theatre in Aotearoa, she describes the course, ‘which focuses upon articulations and inscriptions of personal and cultural identities in a postcolonial theatrical context, using Māori and bicultural theatre in Aotearoa as its primary examples’ (2010, 24). Halba, like Greenwood, focuses her work on the continuing negotiation of identity between different cultures using Māori performance techniques to frame these performative conversations.

Whilst it is essential to acknowledge the special nature of this theatre in New Zealand, I wish to find a model that can walk beside these models. Halba, in describing her methodology, offers me some ideas of how I might shape my own working practice:

Each individual embarking upon the creation of such a piece of theatre brings with them multiple ‘cultural’ and intercultural encounters, specific to them. As we rub up against each other, cultural ‘atoms’ adhere, so the theatrical interventions created by the classes sought to respond to their own intersecting, interpenetrating and contesting cultural identities.

Theatre created within such a context can be seen as having produced – as opposed to simply reflecting – constructions of cultural meaning within its discourse. (2010, 29)

The possibility that cultural identities have a malleable quality means that participants can construct cultural meanings amongst themselves, by working together in the liminal space of theatre. This would suggest that if I could get young people from a diverse range of cultures and ethnicities together in a theatre workshop, there would be some reconstructed sense of culture within that group; creating common ground.

The idea of culture affecting identity is analysed by Hazel Barnes. She based her research on a workshop undertaken by students at a university in South Africa. In *'Inhlanzi Ishelwe Amanzi!! As Fish Out of Water: finding authentic voices in a multicultural student production'* she describes the experience of students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds as they developed a physical theatre performance piece. The workshop aimed to look at ideas of praxis and cultural action, with particular reference to Freire. Barnes describes what the participants learned:

They have come to understand the extent to which a hierarchical approach to culture, inherited from the past, has deprived and dehumanised us all and has limited our understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Their sense of who they are, to what degree they are products of their cultures and to what degree they are

free agents for creating change is more clearly defined.

(1999, 177)

There is a sense of liminality in this work; of an awareness that identity and culture can be subject to change. A more recent study of the implications for cultural identification through liminality in performance can be read in *Dismantling Road Blocks: Non-Violent Resistance of the Palestinian-Israeli Group 'Combatants for Peace'* by Chen Alon. In this work he explains how the liminality of the performance space, (in this case the constantly fluctuating zone that stands as a threshold between Palestinian and Israeli ground) is mirrored by the liminal nature created by the fluidity of the roles taken by participants as they traverse this liminal space. Alon references Jill Dolan when he suggests that this fluctuation in identity provides an opportunity to create a utopian potential:

The possibility of imagining and then embodying crossing borders between polarized spaces within the framework of theatrical exercises – in which one can cross the imaginary 'line' and appear next to or inside the opposite group – is charged with performative utopian potential. (Citron, 2014, 194)

In *'Social transformance: In defence of political performance art'*, Eva Brenner continues the theme as presented by Dolan of theatre's

transformative nature. She explains how the working processes involved in drama can help develop common ground amongst participants and audience:

Performances are – or at least can be – model utopian societies. Workshops are ways to destroy ignorance; rehearsals are ways to creatively relate to others not by submerging or ignoring differences, but by exploring differences as the group devises a generous common way forward; performances can hold up to public view the outcome of such active research. (Citron, 2014, 180)

This brings me to the model provided by Playback Theatre, which works from an assumption that theatre can be both healing and transformative. Playback Theatre was developed in New Zealand by the American Jonathan Fox, a student of Moreno and Freire, and Jo Salas, a musician and activist from New Zealand. Playback asks the audience to tell a story on stage, which is then re-enacted by the Playback troupe. It is similar in intent to Moreno's Psychodrama in that, 'playback invites catharsis' (Moreno, 1940, 265). However the manipulation of image varies from Boal significantly.

In Boal's Image Theatre it is fundamental to the freeing of oppression that a participant crafts his own image; however in Playback, the actors present their interpretation of an image as

described by an audience member. The resulting image is often accompanied by music. In his paper, '*Culture and Community: Playback Theatre*', Jo Salas explains how the creation of these images affects the audience:

This process allows the Teller and other audience members to see their experience crystallized made clear and cohesive... A series of moments from the confusion of ordinary life becomes the subject for intense artistic focus and expression; the moments are comprehended, celebrated, and entrusted to the communities reservoir of self-knowledge. (1983, 19)

The philosophy behind Playback Theatre means that a community does not need to be in crisis in order for Playback Theatre to work. Ordinary moments in life can be played back in a way that reframes them as moments of worth to the community concerned. It is worth noting that companies such as *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu* combine aspects of Playback with Theatre of the Oppressed to create community theatre.

There are ideas arising from Playback Theatre that may be useful, particularly if the community I am working with is not yet ready to accept that there is any crisis in their community. There are also significant differences. Playback Theatre acts as a visiting troupe of

performers who come into communities with a reasonably generic ideal outcome. I work within specific communities in which I am also resident and participant, seeking common ground in a way that I can include myself on an ongoing basis.

There are a plethora of community based performance groups who have created working models based on the combined philosophies of Moreno and Boal. For his article, '*Augusto Boal and Jacob Moreno Theatre and therapy*', Daniel Feldhendler quotes Boal himself, to emphasise the point that the division between Boal and Moreno seems to be more a question of terminology than ideology:

In my opinion, Boal and Moreno share a fundamental conception of theatre and its healing effects and, even further, of human kind. According to Boal, "Theatre is conflict and life is conflict. Oppression exists in the relationship between two persons, when dialog becomes monolog. The aim is to become human again by reestablishing the dialog. (Boal 1991, Theatre of the Oppressed Workshop in Giessen, 89)

The significance for my own project is that by adapting aspects from the work of Moreno and Boal, I can find a way that would best facilitate working in communities that appear to have a predominantly white culture, such as Ashburton. Boal seems to be particularly

welcoming of these adaptations to his work. Describing how she used Theatre of the Oppressed techniques with the elderly, Pam Schweitzer explains her renegotiation of terms to reflect the complexity of the issues addressed by this particular community. In *‘Many Happy retirements: An interactive theatre project with older people’*, she describes the process she went through:

While Theatre of the Oppressed techniques are invaluable in Age Exchange work, “Theatre of the Oppressed” seems too heavy a term for the kind of domestic encounters we depict between older people who exist in a relatively stable and comfortable social and political environment. Where the oppression lies is often difficult to pinpoint in these situations; the power games we are showing are often so subtle that the perpetrators are not even aware of a conflict. Also, the roles of protagonist and antagonist are a shifting affair, and a fluid use of the Boal technique is required to maximize the impact of the audience’s insights; that is, by modifying the forum convention of replacing only one oppressed protagonist in each scene, the conditions of oppression were more thoroughly unveiled.

Discussing this piece with Boal, he agreed that a flexible approach could well be productive with the

audiences of Age Exchange, and that there might be cues here for restructuring forums with other populations that explore complex power relationships of a personal kind. (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994, 80)

Schweitzer's reference to the way the roles of the protagonist and antagonist can be regarded as a 'shifting affair' needing constant renegotiation, is similar to the assertion I made at the beginning of this introduction about cultural oppression being on a constantly changing continuum. The degree of relative stability experienced by the elderly participants parallels the relative stability of communities that are predominantly monocultural. Schweitzer's modifications to Theatre of the Oppressed are an indication for how I may need to proceed when working in similar communities where a group does not identify itself as being part of an oppressive culture. In order to negotiate a way of developing a dialogic relationship around the issues of culture within themselves and others, I may also have to present a modified version of Theatre of the Oppressed that may be more suitable to the needs of this type of community.

In '*Theatre for living: the Art and Science of Community-based dialogue*', David Diamond describes how he has created a version of Theatre of the Oppressed which has a particular focus on 'how communities function as living conscious organisms, and about how

we can use theatre, a symbolic and primal language, as a vehicle for living communities to tell their stories' (2008, 23). Diamond has used his techniques to help heal communities, particularly first peoples.

Most recently Sarah Ahmed has commented on the continuing renegotiation of terms such as culture and identity. She explains that it is necessary for theatre to continue in its attempts to create a dialogue theatrically with the role of the 'other'; 'The differences between us necessitate the dialogue, rather than disallow it – a dialogue must take place, precisely *because* we don't speak the same language' (2000, 180, italics in the original).

Summary of the thesis: The first chapter of my thesis includes an exploration of the work of my chosen practitioner-theorists within the framework of a workshop developed by a New Zealand practitioner. I will give a detailed description and critical analysis of each activity against the question of its intended purpose in the overall development of finding common ground amongst the participants. The second chapter details the series of steps I went through after participating in the workshop, starting with my efforts to introduce the workshop exercises at Ashburton College, through to my own efforts to create a drama workshop in the community of Ashburton. It concludes with a description of developing Contact Community Theatre. Throughout this process I kept supporting video evidence of rehearsals, plus photographs of the participants which will provide

material for my analysis and conclusions accompanied by testimonials or comments they provided me.

As the facilitator for this project, I maintained a journal of each event explicitly detailing the delivery of each activity and the response of the participants to each activity. I also recorded the resulting creations developed by each group and noted their reflections on their own creations as the workshops progressed. Finally I documented the final performances when they were presented to the participants' families, friends and the local community.

Central to the conclusion of this thesis is a detailed reflection on the performance that was developed using the theatrical process in relation with the young people involved in the workshop. My concern is to consider this work both as artistic practice and in terms of how effective it might be seen to have been as a way of testing ideas experientially. My theoretical framework will be centred on the question of praxis in relationship to theoretical models referenced within the thesis. I will use the conclusions drawn from this thesis to inform my practice as a drama teacher, and hope that this research will enhance my understanding of how to be open to working in new ways within my own community.

Finally it will dispute the assertion that finding common ground is an assimilationist value, but rather an attempt to preserve cultural identities and celebrate cultural differences within a theatre model. This will point the way to further developments within future projects that explore the impact of the application of such terms using a practice-based research model.

Chapter One: The search for a model

My search for a model included a number of workshop and performance experiences, which whilst impressive in their own right, were perhaps less applicable to my own objectives than I would have liked. I will present two of these workshop and performance experiences, Jim Moriarty's *Te Rakau* and a Playback Theatre workshop in Christchurch, for brief analysis and a discussion of some of the aspects that might be adapted for my own purposes. However for my primary project—using theatrical techniques to create common ground for diverse ethnic and cultural groups—one workshop experience stood out, that is the 'Natural High' workshop presented by Dr O'Connor, because it seemed more aligned with my own social and educational context, and it is this workshop on which the chapter will ultimately focus.

This chapter offers a critical analysis of the 'Natural High' workshop. It starts with a description of the Baptist Church on Oxford Terrace, looking at the implications surrounding the choice of venue for a workshop. It explores the underlying philosophy of using such techniques as an introductory 'Silent Circle' and the creation of the 'Behavioural Contract', referencing the approaches of other theorist-practitioners, such as Bolton, that I introduced at the beginning of my thesis.

It will then provide a brief account of the activities used in the two-day workshop before focusing on how observing Dr O'Connor in the role of facilitator might provide me with a model which I could adapt to facilitate my own workshops. It explores how an expert negotiated the inclusion of a prepared resource in a workshop and the impact on the participants, before concluding with an in-depth consideration of practical implications of adapting these activities for my purposes.

This conclusion shows how the development of these activities might help me draw up a series of principles I can apply when working with young people from diverse ethnic and cultural groups—both in this thesis and in my work as a drama teacher.

When I discovered that a two-day course called the 'Natural High Process Drama Workshop' would be held in Christchurch and presented by Dr Peter O'Connor, an expert practitioner of Process Drama, I enrolled immediately. Because Process Drama involves all participants actively creating drama, it, frames the work so that the participants can act both as creators and audience of their own work. This workshop gave me an opportunity to watch a well-respected educator present a workshop adapted to suit the needs of a particular group, using Process Drama principles. I hoped that I would then be able to consider my own model using these similar principles. Dr O'Connor has been the recipient of the AATE (American Alliance for Theatre and Education) 2006 Distinguished Dissertation Award for his 2003 Ph.D. research entitled *'Reflection and Refraction: The*

Dimpled Mirror of Process Drama'. Dr O'Connor's research examined the use of Process Drama within New Zealand's national public health campaign to counter stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness. As the National Facilitator for Drama with the New Zealand Ministry of Education, he was also responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Drama Curriculum of 2001.

Participating in the workshop provided a real opportunity not only to learn how to work in Process Drama, but also to observe an expert practitioner who had specific knowledge of how Process Drama techniques could be applied to an educational context within New Zealand schools.

Finding this opportunity to work with Dr O'Connor was timely as previous to this I had been searching for a model that I could use to frame my own ideas in developing theatre as a platform for discovering common ground between ethnic and cultural groups, but had yet to find anything suitable around which I could frame my own ideas.

One such search led me to watch a performance by young people from Jim Moriarty's *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu* group. The reason I felt that this might be beneficial to my own project was because he had created a piece of community theatre with young people around issues of culture and identity, so I wanted to see if there were any aspects of this that I could adapt to my own ideas around a community theatre project. The other reason I wished to watch this

performance was because of Moriarty's view of theatre as a 'healing process' (2003, 65), which was philosophically similar to Moreno's use of Psychodrama. Sharing the belief that theatre can provide a form of social healing, I thought that this performance might provide me with an insight into how this style of witness theatre could be used, where students would stand up and tell their own stories.

The section in the performance which made the most impact on me was when each of the performers came on stage and delivered their stories to a rapt audience in Greymouth. Often the stories would consist of one lone performer on stage talking directly to the audience with a small degree of re-enactment and characterisation using vocal techniques. This style of delivery immediately gave the audience a sense of witnessing an intimate event that they could not ignore.

As the show continued, the stories linked to each other creating a larger picture evoking images around young Māori in crisis. Sections of the show were performed by the young people joining together as a chorus using traditional Māori performing arts such as songs, manipulating the poi and the rakau, (ancient weapons of war). The effect of the show lingered after seeing the performance, some people wept, (including myself) from listening to such harrowing personal experiences.

The *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu* group are part of an ongoing project developed by Jim Moriarty which has successfully combined Māori performing arts practices with the modern experiences of

Māori youth to create a strong theatre culture . Whilst both Moriarty and myself view theatre as a means for social purposes, Moriarty is working to bring people of aligned social identities together into a defined cultural ground—that is, Māori, or Māori and Pasifika, or bicultural— rather than multicultural, to erase apparent differences, whereas I am trying to make these differences more visible within a more diverse context. Like me, he believes that theatrical ‘play’ can lead to social healing, but Moriarty’s work focuses on strengthening Māori cultural identity, and within this, working to repair the injuries done by colonisation and all that followed.

My project seeks to negotiate ways to acknowledge cultural and ethnic identity within a diverse group. In the same way that Moriarty’s troupe built up a picture about a specific group of young Māori, I could use a similar model where participants would address the audience directly describing their experiences of living in New Zealand through the use of stories. This would enable participants to educate an audience about their experiences of being young people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups. The use of traditional songs and skills throughout the show embedded the performance in Māori cultural identity.

As Moriarty attempts to use theatre to deepen the cultural connection with Māori identity, there is the possibility that I could use this for my own project. Inviting participants to teach other participants performance skills that they connected with their own

specific cultural identities within a workshop would provide participants with an opportunity to experience the embodied learning of these performance skills connected to diverse ethnic and cultural groups; they would also share the common experience of learning these performance skills. This may also provide opportunities to explore new combinations of performance skills from different cultural and ethnic groups as part of the proposed final performance.

What *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu* presents is a utopian ideal. Although it may seem very dark, with performances that speak of abuse and isolation, there is a strong cathartic element to the performance as the stories unfold. These young people present a performance that demonstrates how reclaiming their Whakapapa (system of relationships based on Māori history and genealogy) based on tribal connections helped them overcome adversity with a sense of cultural pride and identity; we, the audience, are witness to their triumph. How might this influence my own project, enabling young people to come together, being comfortable in their own cultural identity but able to share and celebrate in the culture of others?

Moriarty specialises in creating theatre specifically with Māori youth. I am suggesting that my workshop will find common ground in the spaces between New Zealanders and peoples from diverse cultural groups, my thesis suggests that cultural common ground is as much about the spaces between Māori and non-Māori in New Zealand – the 3rd spaces. My project is not attempting to replace cultural identities

that already exist, but to give expressions to new cultures as well. It is important to recognise that within New Zealand, Māori are tangata whenua (literal translation: people of the land, i.e. first peoples) but I feel there is still a need for new migrants to have a standing place within New Zealand, one that does not ignore the rights and traditions of Māori or non-Māori New Zealanders, but stands respectfully beside it.

The next opportunity for further examples to explore in my search for a suitable model came when I enrolled in a Playback Theatre workshop in Christchurch. Like Moriarty's work, Playback Theatre offers theatre as therapy to a community and because of this I felt it may be useful to my project. Whereas Moriarty works to create a performance with members who are within a community, Playback Theatre companies behave more like a travelling troupe with a small group of trained performers who perform to a community.

The workshop offered us the experience of how to work as part of troupe so that we would have an understanding of the basic system of Playback Theatre. The workshop began with a series of physical warm-up exercises. The exercises were intensely physical and required a high level of body contact with differing members of the workshop. This was both interesting and problematic for me, and I wondered how I might negotiate the balance required between exercises that broke down inhibitions between participants, but which to me felt rather intrusive and exercises in my own proposed

workshop. Participants then got into small groups of three to share individual stories based on their journeys to the venue that day, which were then used to develop Playback images. This process required that the facilitator listen carefully to what was being said and then question the story teller for clarification to ensure that images played back remained accurate and true to each individual's intentions. This provided me with an insight into how I might behave as a facilitator, in that by giving my full attention, I would be able to create images that respect the stories being shared. In the ideal, my participants would also learn to pay careful attention to the words spoken by each other to create images from, and with, each other.

Music is an integral part of Playback Theatre performance and as a participant I particularly enjoyed the exercises that had music playing as we moved. The music provided me with a rhythmical framework allowing me to focus my attention outside myself. Again the experience made me wonder how I might apply this to my own workshops. By providing a mood, the careful application of music can enhance the delivery of some exercises: it can also help camouflage the awkward silences that occasionally characterise meetings of new groups of people. Normally Playback Theatre performances contain improvised music that is played during the performance. In this workshop however, none of the participants in the workshop I attended were conversant in improvising music, so the instruments

provided remained untouched and so it was difficult to appreciate how music might be applied to enhance the performance experience.

The Playback Theatre workshop was interesting in that it provided me with some specific principles that I could apply to my own workshop, but I did feel as though the focus of the performance was on entertainment rather than education. If my model was to focus on working with cultural and ethnic diversity for a social purpose, then finding a model that required participants to be actively involved in the performance of their own stories seemed to offer more educative possibilities.

Both workshops were interesting for the ideas they provoked and both gave me some idea around how to structure a workshop. I felt though, that because of my interest in the way theatre could be used educatively; that a workshop grounded in Process Drama techniques might provide me with a more suitable model to follow. This is why Dr O'Connor's workshop appealed to me so much.

Dr O'Connor had designed the two-day workshop, (sponsored by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand) both for teachers and non-teachers. The purpose of the workshop was to help teachers and health care practitioners help teenagers avoid being bullied and avoid becoming bullies. He proposed to achieve this by providing a range of Process Drama techniques that health workers and teachers could use to aid students increase resilience in the face of mental health issues. He chose to model his Teaching as a Performance model, which

placed us, as participants of this workshop, in the role of modelling performing as well.

As Dr O'Connor was working through a double consciousness, (that of performing the act of performing to drama teachers and other professional practitioners) we were also performing the act of performing. The deliberate application of metaxis, 'the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds' (Boal, 1985, 43), to the workshop invited participants to be thoughtful in our practice so that we might be able to deliver the activities provided in a thoughtful and appropriate manner. This was particularly important to me as I also wanted to reflect on my own practice as a teacher and a facilitator of my own workshops. If I wished to design lessons or programmes that encouraged a group of people from diverse ethnic and cultural groups to come together to create a new piece of theatre, then I too would have to adapt activities from my chosen practitioner theorists to suit my ideas. O'Connor's style of delivery might also provide an insight into the delivery of these activities to a newly formed group.

What made the workshop so suitable for my area of study was that it brought together different people with a shared agenda, creating a kind of common ground by starting in a circle where people introduced themselves and shared activities in a group. By the end of the workshop a sense of becoming a group had been established; still

made up of diverse individuals, but with a set of experiences in common.

The Venue

The first day started at 9:00 a.m. My colleague and I arrived late, by which time the room had already been set up with all the furniture set aside to create an empty working space except for a circle of chairs. A cursory glimpse round the room suggested that most people in the workshop were white New Zealanders. During the initial introductions it was established that most of the participants were drama teachers specialising in secondary drama, working in the South Island of New Zealand. The Baptist Church Hall where we were seated was in close proximity to a magnificent altar and large congregational area, which proved a powerful presence, albeit unacknowledged by anyone in the workshop.

The choice of setting up a workshop in a venue that already has such a strong social frame such as a church is problematic. There is great value in using such organisations for projects like mine. The various churches in Ashburton attract new migrants because of their familiarity and centrality to migrant communities. Church representatives are often primary sources for coordinating workshops and talks aimed specifically at the various new migrant groups. They often liaise with other Non-Government Organisations (N.G.Os) such as the Ashburton Newcomers' Community group, to create local

support networks for new migrants. The local churches in Ashburton may be potential sources for workshop participants or venues, as they are in essence, common ground for a number of migrants.

It is important to comment that at the time of writing the number of venues in Canterbury had been severely reduced due to the 2011 earthquakes and the possibility of finding a venue that has a wider social frame could prove difficult. Practically a venue provides a platform of common ground, being the place that participants who have already established a common intention to create theatre come together. If my intention is to work with a diverse range of young people, both culturally and ethnically, then the ‘presence’ of church may prove to be problematic. Churches are not neutral spaces; a venue that is too precisely identified with one group of worshippers to the exclusion of others may prove counter-productive. Some participants may abjure using a Christian church for a venue because of religious or personal reasons. In the cases where options are limited, perhaps an attempt to find an ideal venue is irreconcilable with the desire to bring a diverse group of people together. It is important to acknowledge that any performance space may have an effect on participants’ potential desire to be involved in the project, even if that level of influence remains largely unknown.

The Introductory Circle

We entered a room that had been constructed to form a settled space to work in. Where the room had been cleared, a circle of chairs

had been laid out in a circle facing inwards, with no gaps between participants. Participants were asked to talk about who they were and why they were attending the workshop to the person next to them; the effect was that immediately we were involved in encounters with fellow participants. This arrangement of the chairs helped to facilitate the introductory part of the workshop as there was nowhere else to go to avoid being involved in the exercise.

The idea of a circle as an introductory exercise is to allow the individual to focus on meeting the rest of the group. In practice, this exercise forces the individual directly into a performance situation where each participant must memorise facts concerning their neighbour's name and their reason for being at the workshop, before presenting this to the rest of a large group. The anticipation and immediate critical self-reflection generated after this performance resulted in some participants feeling so self-conscious about themselves as individuals, that I imagine that we did not necessarily take note of what was being said. In my observation rather than aligning us a group, this exercise had the reverse effect.

Dr O'Connor attempted to ameliorate this effect by inviting participants to introduce their neighbour to the rest of the group. His modification of the Introductory Circle ensured that at least two individuals could be connected as part of a platform of temporary commonality of experience. The use of an Introductory Circle might not suit people who are from other cultures as it might both assume

too much about what their prior experience is and be seen as prescribing a remedy for a problem that does not exist. For example, a group who are already familiar with each other—like an established school class—may have little need for such lengthy introductions.

This introductory segment forced a kind of new intimacy into the group based on the assumption that each member had never previously met, introducing the expectation of the ‘Caring Expert’, a tool used throughout the two-day workshop. As this expectation was directed by the facilitator it proved hard to retain the role of ‘Caring Expert’ throughout the two days.

As a teacher myself, the double consciousness of being a participant experiencing the exercise and being a teacher watching how Dr O’Connor delivered this exercise, provided an important principle that would be useful to apply to my own model. Even in this small group of people, many of whom knew one another Dr O’Connor was still modelling how to behave as if people did not already know each other. The principle he appeared to be working towards was not to assume every participant will have the same perspective about the workshop.

Dr O’Connor’s delivery of his introductory session was a lengthy process conducted in intense silence, with only the introducer speaking. Such a long introductory session necessarily creates tension between wanting to give people enough time to meet and get to know each other, and a sense of urgency within drama workshops to ‘do’

drama. The challenge here is to be efficient, not to speed through an entire section too soon. It raised the question around how I wish to frame my own introductory exercises.

As I am hoping to work with young people from a range of diverse and ethnic cultures, it would be important to allow space in a new environment for participants to come together and identify themselves to others in a manner which they feel appropriate.

Allowing participants to identify themselves by naming the roles that they feel are representative of them and to them would be an essential first step to the work I am trying to create. Once cultural identities have been explored, the group can then move on to examine areas of cultural difference and common ground, and the introductory session would be a moment when information could be shared. If participants are struggling with their own self-consciousness about sharing information, then even though the Introductory Circle offers an ideal of working, it may not necessarily prove the most effective model for the creation of a common platform.

Boal delivered his introductory sessions through a series of movement exercises called '*Knowing the Body*' (1985, 126, italics in the original), which are 'designed with the objective of making each person aware of his own body, of his bodily possibilities' (127). Boal emphasises that importance of knowing the body first before any real understanding of theatre can realistically occur; 'to control the means of theatrical production, man must, first of all, control his own body,

know his own body, in order to be capable of making it more expressive' (125). In Boal's programme, each participant must first complete individual exercises before they engage with another participants. As close physical proximity is developed, introductions become a subordinate task to focussing on the given exercise. Each task increases the number of participants involved until a full group activity is achieved through graduated steps.

Boal's introductory exercises are developed from an understanding of the need to communicate through the physical rather than the verbal in order to encourage greater self-expression; 'In our culture we are used to expressing everything through words, leaving the enormous capabilities of the body in an underdeveloped state' (130). For Boal, silence is a tool that allows participants to 'listen' with their bodies to a common language. Boal worked within communities who were from similar cultural groups who shared a common goal.

Whilst using Boal's approach may create the sense of a common physical language, it pre-supposes that all participants are comfortable with close physical proximity with other people, which may not be the case. It does not address the considerations surrounding how different ethnic, cultural or religious considerations might temper the delivery of certain exercises, such as specific limitations associated around close physical proximity with members of the opposite sex. I am interested in using physical exercises as an

initial step in the creation of a sense of group amongst participants, which does not rely on a common spoken language.

In '*Inhlanzi Ishelwe Amanzi—As Fish Out of Water*', Hazel Barnes describes how Ericka Block and Hilary Ramsden chose to use physical exercises in their project creating a piece of multicultural theatre with students from South Africa:

The first emphasis was on working with the body. This included building group cohesion through physical exercises. The first 3 days were spent entirely on trust-building exercises and group work. It was interesting to see how quickly the group bonded through close physical cooperation before any sharing of feelings or experience was attempted. (1995, 165)

Here is an example of Boal's approach to the creation of group being applied in a multicultural situation. This would suggest that in practice there is a continuum that is in flux and any group of people must constantly negotiate together in order to create theatre, dependent on their individual needs. The introductory phase of my own workshops may necessarily require flexibility along a spectrum between O'Connor's Introductory Circle and Boal's Knowing the Body.

The behavioural contract

One of the ways Dr O'Connor sought to create a positive working environment was through the creation of what he termed, a behavioural contract. The creation of the behavioural contract proved to be one of the most useful and troubling aspects of the workshop. The purpose of the contract was distinctive; it seemed to create a social contract where participants were requested to agree a contract of learning. Each point was written on a whiteboard by Dr O'Connor who clarified specific word use, ensuring all participants endorsed the language used for each point. In the ideal this would endorse a sense of community by governing a group's working practice, ensuring they negotiated the creation of theatre in a communal and respectful atmosphere. But in reality, the ongoing consultation of this document served to underpin a sense of convergence that controlled the behaviour of members in the workshop. By agreeing to this contract, the participants submitted themselves to the authority of the group and by extension, the facilitator.

Dr O'Connor is offering teachers in secondary schools a useful model for working in Process Drama. Gavin Bolton refers to the creation of a social contract as the 'initial act of submission' (Bolton, 1984, 110). Agreeing to this first step is of itself a tacit agreement to work in a drama environment binding participants together as a temporary group within an agreed code of conduct. Writing the agreement on the board concretises the act, helping to reduce possible future conflict. Something similar to a social contract would appear to

entail reframing the culture of the classroom, providing an important solution to working in an ‘inauthentic environment’ (Heathcote, 1984, 192). It can create space for learning in Process Drama to take place. In a classroom, such frameworks strategically ignore the discipline system that underpins most school organisations. The emphasis moves away from the desire to create theatre as a motivating factor toward a form of crowd control. My view of community— where young people from a diverse cultural and ethnic group are encouraged to explore difference— may differ from the model presented by Dr O’Connor, and therefore require a different model.

In his PhD research entitled *‘Reflection and Refraction: The Dimpled Mirror of Process Drama’*, Dr O’Connor recognises that an important function of Process Drama is how it can be used to explore a wide range of viewpoints:

If Process Drama acts not to imitate or reflect reality but rather acts to distort, highlight or obscure aspects of reality, then it might be more accurate to think of reflection in Process Drama as refraction. In using refraction to describe what happens, we acknowledge that in Process Drama we do not attempt to reveal the truth about the self or the worlds in which we live. Rather, we seek to reveal a multiplicity of selves and truths, of possible and contradictory and rejected truths and worlds and perhaps, most importantly, of emergent

selves and worlds previously unimagined and yet to be.

(2003, 263)

If Dr O'Connor, who clearly understands that Process Drama works from exploring a multiplicity of truths, chooses to create a contract that encourages convergence, then his use of a behavioural contract at the beginning of his workshop would appear to be in conflict with his findings. It would seem that, whilst Process Drama may offer the possibility of exploring a range of ideas, the structure of workshop that Dr O'Connor is offering around the subject of bullying may require a particular convergence of focus. Perhaps this is Dr O'Connor's ideal for creating community, through a series of frameworks that encourage a subtle convergence of communal ideas.

Knowing that his workshop has to cater for participants who are both teachers and non-teachers, Dr O'Connor is offering a model that has been adapted from the framework of Process Drama to suit a range of educational expertise. However as an educationalist, Dr O'Connor may be providing a model that for someone like me who is working in the realm of social theatre, is too far along the education spectrum towards practitioners in teaching roles. If I chose to implement a code of conduct based on encouraging convergence, how would it affect my intentions to create a platform where cultural divergence is explored? In a workshop, such social contracts may help a group frame how they wish to create drama together. Perhaps when placed in an educational setting this model works as it

recognises the need to reaffirm overt behavioural expectations, which are explicitly agreed.

I wish to develop a model that offers moments where differences in perceptions create opportunities to discuss cultural perceptions and different cultural associations. A model that seeks to immediately create a single convergent perspective in which to work might discourage any exploration of difference. Any model that does not allow for and recognise differences would prove counter-productive. My own practical theatrical experiments, aimed at young people from diverse cultural and ethnic communities, may be hindered by an approach that insists on convergence if it becomes behavioural. Perhaps the idea of community I am striving for is very different from the behavioural contract at the centre of learning in school.

Dorothy Heathcote neatly sidesteps the issue of a behavioural contract by providing a context to the development of rules within a specific drama frame, for example Bolton describes when participants were, 'creating a book of monastery rules' on handmade paper as part of a wider Mantle of the Expert event (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, 45). The creation of the behavioural contract becomes a subsidiary part of the students learning about historical events and scientific processes. Moriarty chooses an approach based on the New Zealand 'whanau' model, where participants are encouraged to acknowledge a spiritual connection as part of an extended family. He explains that; 'we're trying to create a new sense of family, a new sense of trust

with them and it's a creative thing. It's a family that has a common desire to - I guess, to examine their spiritual resonance' (2003, 65).

If culture is fluid, then in every workshop each group member will have a cultural identity that is fluid. So whilst it is important to acknowledge the importance of an underlying social contract, the nature of this contract may have to be shaped by the needs of each group as they require. The principle for any theatrical experimentation I wish to deliver, is how to develop ways of working that facilitate the development of a social contract through the relationships created in that particular group.

Modifying the activities

The workshop concentrated on the background issues that cause a teenager to become involved in drug use, with particular emphasis on a section entitled 'Belonging' which focused on the effects of social isolation and bullying. The workshop was split into two discrete sections. The first part was a series of pre-exercises introducing techniques that would be used in the second part of the workshop. The second part introduced how to use the resources developed by Dr O'Connor in conjunction with the Ministry of Health.

Dr O'Connor chose to develop roles through discussion around the theme of bullying. Each participant paired up with someone they had not previously worked with and spoke about an event that had happened to them when they were bullied. Then they were placed in

groups of four and asked to repeat the bullying tale of their partners as if it was their own tale. This preparatory working in role created emotional distance from the source material and provided further investment in the role of 'Caring Expert'. Once each group had made their production decision they were instructed to find the key moment of tension in the story, which Dr O'Connor described as "the biggest bang for your buck!" Participants then recreated it as a 'Frozen Image'; a theatrical convention that allows participants to physicalise an idea, theme or a specific moment. Frozen Image is a modified version of Boal's Image Theatre. Image Theatre capitalised on these concretising moments to develop a theatrical dialogue that explored issues arising from these images. For Boal the most significant moment is:

When finally an image is arrived at that is the most acceptable to all, then the spectator-sculptor is asked to show the way he would like the given theme to be; that is, in the first grouping the actual image is shown, in the second the ideal image. Finally he is asked to show a transitional image, to show how it would be possible to pass from one reality the other; in other words, how to carry out the change, the transformation (1985, 135).

Once the image has been created it can reveal deeper layers of meaning or apparent juxtapositions in viewpoints that may not arise through discussion alone. The participant gets to see what their

experience looks like as separate from themselves and then they get to change it. The presentation of this exercise is central to my workshop experiences because it is the moment when a range of viewpoints occur, (both contradictory and complementary) that an opportunity for praxis would happen, revealing the differences in perceptions and cultural conserves. From this moment participants in my workshop would then have an opportunity to create drama that explored what those perceptions looked like and develop their cultural literacy. The development of these perceptions could then be shared with the group to provide opportunities for common ground.

For Moreno the creation of an image can be used as a mirror to view the 'interpersonal relations and private worlds' (Fox, 2008, 14). The purpose of these exercises was to increase the sense of investment in the 'Natural High' resources, by bridging the participants' own experiences with those of the characters they would meet in the formalised programme. The concretising of thoughts and emotions enabling an individual to confront his or her oppressions and explore theatrically possible solutions is at the heart of Boal's Image Theatre. However in Dr O'Connor's workshop, these exercises were presented in such a way so as to reduce the diversity of personal responses into the creation of an image. He did this by inviting each participant to 'step out' of their Frozen Image once the image was concretised. Dr O'Connor asked each participant in every group to take on the role of director and clarify the action by manipulating the

frozen members as if they were mannequins. The exercise was performed in silence so there was no opportunity for discussion about purpose or intent within the groups. Sometimes the image was repeatedly manipulated by members of a group, demonstrating a lack of agreement between them. Some groups gave up on their images, suggesting confusion around the purpose of this exercise.

In Image Theatre, Boal intended that one person would act as director creating one image from their own personal experiences to create their own solutions to their own oppressions:

The poetics of the oppressed focuses on the action
itself: the spectator delegates no power to the character
(or actor) either to act or to think in his place; on the
contrary, he himself assumes the protagonic role,
changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions,
discusses plans for change- in short trains himself for
action. In this case, perhaps the theater is not
revolutionary in itself, but it is surely a rehearsal for
the revolution. No matter that the action is fictional;
what matters is that is action! (Boal, 1985, 122)

In this workshop Dr O'Connor had all members of one group act as directors with the task of creating a 'stronger image', strategically ignoring the theatrical possibilities that a range of divergent views might provide. Unlike Dr O'Connor, I am seeking to find means of working that will provide my participants with an opportunity for

exploring cultural conserves and their perceptions as a way of discovering common ground. For this reason, in my own practical, theatrical explorations I would wish to retain the ‘the polysemy of images’ (Boal, 1995, xxiii), to strategically engage with the theatrical possibilities that a range of divergent views might provide.

At this stage in the workshop, participants had listened to others, created an image from these stories and then refined that image. The next step was to add language to an image. As each image was performed, the other participants were invited to list their observations. As in the introductory exercise, participants tended to err towards inference rather than observational evidence, however this time Dr O’Connor encouraged inference, particularly where similar conclusions were being drawn amongst the participants. His strategic use of inference to support a convergent view provided me with an opportunity to reflect on inference as a principle that could be applied to my own work. As I am seeking ways to encourage a debate created from divergent viewpoints, then the introduction of inference early on in my workshop could provide participants with an opportunity to share their perceptions based on their cultural and ethnic standpoints around the creation of a Frozen Image.

In the next activity, one group was chosen to re-create their Frozen Image. Dr O’Connor then invited the other participants to imagine what any of the frozen participants might be thinking in role and then stand behind that character once they had thought of a

possible line. Each participant standing behind a role was instructed to speak, creating a verbal collage of possible thoughts associated with each role in the Frozen Image. The verbal collage reinforced the development of a similar understanding of the situation that was being produced between the participants, further encouraging convergence of response.

The final exercise in this section analyses the moment where each group of participants had an opportunity to perform. There was a much greater sense of play invoked by these exercises and the atmosphere amongst the participants was far more relaxed and jovial. After each group had organised their spoken thoughts into script, they were tasked with presenting their dramas using the initial Frozen Image as their starting scene. In a twist, Dr O'Connor gave each group a style or genre to frame their performances. These included Chinese Opera, American Western, Film Noir, melodrama and martial arts. The genres chosen had definite structures which could dictate style of vocal delivery and acting technique. These were then transposed onto the performances providing an opportunity to indulge in some theatrically excessive performances creating much hilarity for performers and spectators alike. The further distancing from the original drama source made the content secondary to the style being performed. The use of such defined genres also served to camouflage any flaws in the delivery of the storylines that a more naturalistic style may have exposed.

As a teacher playing the double role of participant and observer, it was interesting to reflect how this was the most enjoyable exercise of the two-day workshop. It contrasted sharply with the introductory section of the workshop which emphasised silence and stillness. The sense of freedom to create something that was fun reinforced how important the principle of learning through play is to any creative collaborative project, and how I would need to apply this in the delivery of my own theatrical experiments.

Presenting the resource

At the conclusion of these pre-exercises all participants received the resource material associated with the next workshop session, which concerned 'Jane and the Bullies'. Dr O'Connor provided each participant with an A4 sized plastic covered orange ring binder called '*Natural High*' that had been produced by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand. The packaged resource had to be tightly structured so that non drama specialists could deliver a prescriptive programme tailored to ensure consistent outcomes.

The contents of the folder were presented in separate printed sections with accompanying resources. The introduction explained the purpose of the manual as 'a new way of looking at alcohol and drugs. It focuses on one important piece of the jigsaw puzzle, the problem use of alcohol and drugs as a way of dealing with psychological distress' (Nichol and O'Connor, 2002, 22). Supporting this was

background research from a mental health promotion study organising the human experience into the tri-fold sections of 'Belonging, Being and Becoming.' Jane's story was one of three stories in the folder and was designed to explore the importance of 'Belonging', which covered the areas of:

The relationship, social, cultural and environmental dimension of life; family, peer group, schools, religious or spiritual movements, clubs and teams; cultural identity, gender, sexual orientation, loyalty and connection with country or geographical area'(3).

There was an overall explication of a variety of techniques and methods of delivery that could be used with the three stories. The resources included custom designed comic strips, academic extracts referencing research into the psychological effects of drugs and alcohol, thought webs, self-assessment charts and coloured Venn diagrams with accompanying tiny strips of plastic with various words typed on them in plastic bags. One page was dedicated to references for the academic extracts, whilst another provided contacts for further help in the Mental Health Foundation and the Alcohol Advisory Council.

The programme was marketed as being relevant to the Health Education Curriculum, but it also stated that it could be adapted easily for a wider community setting. This proved problematic for me as the adaptations did not seem to be for dramaturgical reasons but rather to

ensure outcomes could be guaranteed for the organisations that fell within the purview of the contributing Ministries of Health and Education. The package was being sold as a tool kit to be easily presented by any unskilled individual after being fully demonstrated by an expert acting as a salesperson. However as the workshop progressed, it became clear to me that the reason the workshop was so successful was because of the skills of the Expert Practitioner presenting it. In my opinion it would require someone with a high degree of expertise to be able to extract techniques from the folder and reshape the content from its original context and apply them to a group of participants.

Having taught us how the exercises worked in the introductory section of the workshop, Dr O'Connor now used the same exercise to explore the issue of bullying framed around this resource, providing practical examples for the delivery of the material. This gave him an opportunity to resolve any questions around the implementation of the resources and answer any concerns raised by the participants about their own abilities to use these resources effectively.

The first exercise involving a resource from the folder was a cartoon drawing of a girl standing by herself, her face reflected in a long mirror. Another girl who was part of a group of four was sitting on a bench top offering what appeared to be a cigarette to the girl on her own. The setting was a toilet and the girl who was on her own looked rather nervous and afraid of the rest of the group. Another girl

was standing slightly apart from all of them and appeared to be watching what was happening. All the girls were white and dressed in school uniform. The participants had to list all the things they observed in the picture and the characters portrayed in it. Paulo Freire used images in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Preferring to use photographs taken by participants, he referred to these images as codifications. Freire stressed the importance of using codifications that had relevance to the immediate world experienced by participants:

So that they can easily recognise the situations (and thus their own relation to them). It is inadmissible (whether during the process of investigation or in the following stage, when the meaningful thematics are presented as program content) to present pictures of reality unfamiliar to the participants (Freire, 1970, 95).

Freire encouraged participants to bring their own images, usually photographs that came directly from their own life experiences. The resulting Praxis would develop from the group's discussions as they shared their experiences. In our case however, the option of choosing an area for discussion had been bypassed as this workshop had a pre-determined theme. For the image to act as a stimulus for participants to share real life experiences, it must have enough 'realness' to resonate strongly with its intended audience. Unfortunately by attempting to create a resource that could be used for any situation, I

felt the line drawing lacked any symbolic, cultural, or physical references, thus reducing its authenticity. The question for me was how it might be translated when real teenagers engaged with this cartoon.

In my own practical theatrical workshops, the presentation of a generic image poses a number of interesting options. A generic image may be useful to explore how such images are perceived by different cultural and ethnic groups. However, if a photograph that was specific to each area had been used then, as Freire asserts, it would become a powerful educating tool. The participants would immediately identify with the image and comment with little prompting from the educator, who would then be able to learn much information about and from the group as they generate responses including recognition, conversation and opinion.

In an effort to circumvent the problem of ‘realness’, Dr O’Connor generated discussion based on participants stating what they could see, and then encouraged participants to make inferences from this. This exercise was a repetition of the task the participants had done in the pre exercise, when commenting on the Frozen Image. The use of inference served to reinforce how much the group had become convergent in their views. As part of my own praxis, the most striking aspect of this exercise for me was how quickly I jumped to conclusions about the image. I used my experiences as a school teacher to assume this image was representative of girls’ toilets in

secondary high schools around New Zealand. Other viewpoints included that was a public toilet in a shopping mall or park. If such a generic resource could provoke such a reaction in me, then a more specific image would perhaps be even richer in provoking a range of responses. As Freire states:

In the process of decoding, the participants externalize their thematics and thereby make explicit their “real consciousness” of the world. As they do this, they begin to see how they themselves acted while actually experiencing the situation they are analyzing, and thus reach a “perception of their previous perception.” By achieving this awareness, they come to perceive reality differently (1970, 96).

When a seemingly familiar event or situation is viewed through the frame of drama, not only is the event transformed but also the viewer. If ‘the key moment of empowerment when the participants discover their own solution to their oppressions is when, *‘He practises in the second world (the aesthetic) in order to modify the first (the social)’* (1985, 44). It becomes problematic when participants are already being given an image framed in the aesthetic, asked to reframe it into another aesthetic and then bring this reframed image into the social. This introduces a high degree of separation from the embodied transformation envisaged by Boal.

If I refer to Moreno's work about the creation of drama on the psychodramatic stage, he also comments on the necessity of creating drama from 'The community in which the subjects live...[it] is explored, and by direct interviews or other means the dominating ideologies, emotions or illusions of the community are determined' (Fox, 2008, 61). The implications for my own work would be that resources chosen by the participants should enhance the work they develop because of the cultural relevance to the participants themselves. Ensuring resources have relevancy echoes Freire's assertion concerning the necessity of codifications coming from the participants' own experiences so 'that they can easily recognise the situations (and thus their own relation to them)' (Freire, 1970, 95, brackets in original).

The final two exercises I wish to analyse in this chapter were the use of the Process Drama Conventions of 'Teacher in Role', 'Hot Seating' and 'Blanket Role'. 'Teacher in Role' requires the teacher to answer questions in the manner of the role assigned to him / her. 'Hot Seating' is where students answer questions in the manner of the role assigned to them. 'Blanket Role' is 'a process convention, in which all the participants take the same role within a whole-group role play' (Ministry of Education, New Zealand Curriculum, 2007). All conventions are designed to deepen participants' understanding of particular roles arising from a Process Drama. Dr O'Connor used the convention of Teacher in Role representing the attitude of one of the

gang members, whilst the participants, who were still in the Blanket Role of students, were assigned a further Blanket Role of counsellors and encouraged to question the bully in the style of counsellors. Once participants were fully conversant with this convention, Dr O'Connor introduced a Hot Seating session. A participant was asked to take on the attitude of one of the characters from the cartoon 'Jane and the Bullies' and answer questions about their reasons for bullying posed by a group. The rest of the group remained in their Blanket Role of counsellors. This exercise helped to deepen their understanding of the reasons why characters involved in the story of Jane behaved as they did. Prior to this, participants were given the task of developing recommendations that could be used in the creation of a strategy to help solve the bullying problem. Any information they could gather from this session would be useful in the development of these strategies. Dr O'Connor was offering the participants in his workshop a learning frame that was similar to Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert. Unfortunately for the participants at the workshop, they did not get an opportunity to explore how the framing of drama using Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert could support further learning around an event.

In the example of 'Jane and the Bullies', Dr O'Connor suggested a list of possible tasks such as interviewing students, the creation of a student run help-line, posters and even an anti-bullying campaign involving families and friends. However, due to time constraints he did not have an opportunity to elaborate on these tasks in the

workshop. It is worth noting for my own practice the difficulty of ensuring all tasks are completed satisfactorily when working under a time constraint. If someone as experienced as Dr O'Connor can overrun in a workshop, then a relative novice such as I must be alert to the length of time each task will take. The difficulty with this is that each group will take different amounts of time for different tasks. I will need to maintain a flexible approach so that I can negotiate with the group to ensure that the needs and interests of the group are acknowledged, whilst ensuring the outcomes of the workshop are clearly achieved within the given timeframe.

Bolton suggested that drama did not need Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Frame to provide immediacy and relevancy to learning. Bolton refers to Boal and uses Boal's own terms to support the argument that drama in a classroom can still maintain the transformative quality. He argued that drama creates the state of metaxis anyway, which is the key to embodied learning in a drama classroom:

Heathcote uses the elements of theatre to create powerful improvised experiences that act as catalysing agents on her students, turning them into researchers who can use any subject area to find the information they need... Participants and percipients engage with what is going on by holding two worlds in mind at the same time, what Augusto Boal calls 'metaxis', an

interplay between the actual and the fictitious (Bolton, 1984, 141).

Bolton continues this theme about the external quality of drama; ‘drama is never about oneself; it is always concerned with something outside oneself. [. . .] drama is a social event not a solitary experience’ (Bolton, 1984, 46). Heathcote and Bolton both argue that the use of frame can help to create authentic learning and yet, Dr O’Connor had effectively removed these frames by creating a model that used a generic image. Because it would not be possible to rely on the participants arriving at the same conclusions about this image in a way that would be specific enough to fit his programme, he needed to rely on pre-formulated questions and outcomes. Rather than create an opportunity for participants to explore their own perceptions about bullying and drugs, it seemed to me that the workshop needed to fulfil the criteria of the organisation that had sponsored it; namely the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand. It also had to be packaged in a manner that would appeal to the structural hegemonies of the neo-liberal education system, an organisation that is known to hold assimilationist and Anglo-conformist values.

Role of the facilitator

Witnessing an expert in Process Drama model the role of facilitator in a workshop informed my own learning concerning the

development of my own praxis, offering me ideas about how I might modify my style of teaching to include some of his ideas.

The consistency of Dr O'Connor's calm, relaxed manner conveyed an impression of confidence in his position as an Expert Practitioner who was enjoying sharing his knowledge with the participants. His ability to ensure all participants remained focused was evidenced in the way he moved around the room, moving between groups. When he joined each group, he would position himself at the same level as the person he was speaking to, maintaining eye contact. His relaxed body language built up trust between him and the rest of the group.

Dr O'Connor also chose to tacitly ignore certain remarks that were outside the consensus, which was a powerful tool for cultivating a greater degree of conformity within the group. This was particularly evident when one participant made a verbal suggestion that did not follow the consensus of the group and the remark was subsequently disregarded by the group in later discussion. If discussion moved to an area he felt was outside the criteria of the workshop, he would intervene by directing the participants to the next task. The purpose of this workshop was to familiarise teachers and health care practitioners with the programme created by Dr O'Connor and how to use a range of Process Drama techniques to aid students increase resilience to mental health issues. However it became increasingly clear that the efficacy of the programme lay in the expertise of delivery of the

exercises by the Expert Practitioner, which was not part of the package.

It appeared to me that the commodification of this drama process to ensure very predetermined outcomes tacitly ignored the expertise required to deliver it effectively, undermining both the expertise of the practitioner and the effectiveness of the program. One effective strategy Dr O'Connor did employ to enable his delivery of the material was endowing all the participants with a Blanket Role. As teachers, we assumed the Blanket Role of students. At this juncture there appeared to be some interesting blurring of roles as at certain points Dr O'Connor took on the role of teacher, an authority figure in the class, and endowed us with our respective Blanket Roles of students in the classroom.

At other times, Dr O'Connor was the Expert Practitioner delivering a workshop and we were endowed with the role of interested colleagues. The resulting state of metaxis brought on by using these two roles, (of teacher and student) provided participants with an insight into how the learning would take place using the resource. It also provided another excellent model of behavioural control. If participants queried the implementation of particular areas of the workshop, or were off-task, Dr O'Connor could assume the role of teacher and we would respond in the role of students. At other times he would create a sense of equity by treating us as colleagues on the same professional footing. As an Expert Practitioner, Dr

O'Connor was able to adapt his role to the changing needs of the group, as he saw them.

The role of adaptive Expert Practitioner is one that combines a complex range of skills. Boal names this 'the "Joker" [which] is the system proposed as a permanent form of theater - dramaturgy and staging' (Boal, 1985, 172). For him the purpose of the facilitator was to combine an ability to interact with an audience whilst commenting on the stage performance, to encourage the audiences understanding of the political messages being presented. For Boal the Joker is:

Magical, omniscient, polymorphous and ubiquitous.

On stage he functions as a master of ceremonies,

raisonneur, kurogo, etc. He makes all explanations,

verified in the structure of the performance.' (182)

The Joker can step into the action, take on any role, comment on performance, or he can discuss themes and ideas with the audience at the moment that they are witnessing the action.

Heathcote developed 'Teacher in Role' so that she could act in a similar way to Boal's Joker, interrupting moments of spontaneous role play so that she could direct her students to investigate what they had learned. Heathcote used role to adopt a specific point of view to guide her students to predetermined learning objectives, providing them with directed frameworks:

She goes into role to develop and heighten emotion;

she comes out of it to achieve objectivity needed for

reflection. This she helps participants stir up and express emotion and a moment later set it aside and look at it coolly, growing what she calls a 'cool strip' in their minds. (Wagner, 1976, 128)

Moreno suggested that a facilitator, whom he termed 'Director,' had to have three functions, 'producer, counsellor and analyst' (Fox, 2008, 14). In this way, they could ensure a patient experienced maximum benefit in a Psychodrama session. The director:

enters as a participant-actor, armed with as many hypothetical insights as possible, into the spontaneous activities of the subject, to talk to him in the spontaneous languages of signs and gestures, words and actions, which the subject has developed. (Fox, 1994, 17)

Through this he should work dynamically to problem solve with the subject. The idea of collaborative problem solving was a fundamental tenet of Freire's '*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' where 'Problem-posing education' 'requires that the investigators and the people (who would normally be considered objects of that investigation) should act as *co-investigators*' (Freire, 1970, 87).

For Freire, Boal and Moreno, there is a consensus that whoever runs the workshop has a responsibility to question the actions and the intentions of participants, but not to manipulate the outcomes.

Moreno emphasised the importance of the participant-observer

engaging in a sociometric approach, to ensure she becomes a 'objectified investigator' (Fox, 2008, 116). However the tension created by the constant moulding of the group towards a specific viewpoint meant that the choice of content was not driven by the participants, but by the facilitator. With this appreciation, how might I learn to temper my desire to shape specific outcomes with the intentions and desires of the participants in my own workshop?

This chapter described how my search for a model led me to explore a number of workshops before finding an Expert Practitioner I could emulate. This Expert Practitioner provided me with a model that showed me how I might bring theatrical techniques to bear on a social issue using Process Drama. The case studies focused on in this chapter had their theoretical foundations based on the practitioner-theorists I researched at the beginning of my thesis and seemed most relevant to creating theatre to explore a social issue. From these I was able to garner ideas about best practice in a workshop, building up a picture of what special conditions I need to be alert to. This chapter noted the particular importance of the venue, the introductory session and the role of the facilitator. It also noted a number of activities that seemed to have the most promise in terms of my own research project.

In the same way that Dr Peter O'Connor identifies himself as a consultant, he also carries the roles of teacher, facilitator and drama advisor with him. I will also carry a number of roles within the

communities I live in, such as drama teacher, mother, workshop facilitator, actor and writer. How do I ensure that I learn to walk beside my participants as we co-construct our ideas of common ground? Trying to create the appropriate working atmosphere requires careful listening and an attitude of respect that is ideally modelled by the facilitator; how will I learn to do this as skilfully as Dr O'Connor?

Throughout his workshop there was an underlying tension created between the desire to create authentic learning and the need to present the ideologies of the sponsor. By the same token, I have also noted that for the smooth running of the workshop, it is necessary for the facilitator to make their intended outcomes for the workshop clear. I must be cautious that in learning how to use the theatre to create common ground for people of diverse cultural identities, I do not attempt to influence participants in their creation of this common ground.

I have explored how a venue can influence potential participants, and also how problematic it is to find a venue that does not have some cultural or social associations with it. I have experienced how important it is to ensure the introductory element of a workshop allows all participants an opportunity to meet on equal terms and how difficult it can be to negotiate this with people who you have never met before.

Throughout my research I made a note of particular techniques that seemed most promising and that I understand to be key elements of a

successful workshop. They will need to be present in my own work if I wish to fulfil my intended objectives in my own workshops. The techniques that seem most appropriate for my own work are physical warm-up exercises interspersed with opportunities for reflection which would allow the incremental development of a group dynamic.

One key element is the use of Image Theatre, which provides participants with opportunities to express cultural differences both orally and visually. The use of objects or pictures as codifications also seems to be a necessary component of the work I wish to do as it is a way of bringing ideas around cultural significance with each of the participants and may later become a foundation for performance work. By using personal accounts we can also explore cultural differences, which can be explored theatrically by the group. Most importantly for me as a facilitator is recognising how important it is to have a flexible approach when creating theatre with any group of people. Every group will potentially develop a different cultural identity depending on the participants. This cultural identity will be subject to constant negotiation both within the group and as part of the wider community.

The next chapter describes how I attempted to use these key elements of my emerging model to improve my understanding of their function within three main settings. The first describes how I adapted Dr O'Connor's workshop for teaching a Year Nine drama class about bullying. The second describes how I created 'Endless Cups of Tea', a

workshop based on an art exhibition in the Ashburton Gallery. The aim of this workshop was to explore cultural differences through objects as codifications, which would, I hoped, lead to connections making common ground.

The final setting was the creation of Contact Community Theatre in Ashburton. It describes the group and how they created a performance for their family and friends. The chapter concludes by explaining that although each event proved problematic, each also provided me with hope that I could create theatre for social purposes in the community that may be both educative and utopian. It further explains how I define community, which is where people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups work together with a common desire to create theatre, who maintain their identity as individuals and who are respectful of the differences in each other.

Chapter Two: Reassembling the Jigsaw

Having explored the possible diverse ideas about using theatre for social purposes both in theory and in practice, this chapter will describe my own experiments in creating theatrical strategies for social purposes. It revisits the examples I drew from the theories I explored in the introduction of this thesis and also explains how I developed ideas taken from watching *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu*, being a participant of the Playback Theatre workshop and participating in Dr O'Connor's 'Natural High' workshop. This chapter therefore is as much about how my experiments failed as it is about my successes. In the process of my explorations, certain principles have emerged which I have distilled into a series of strategies from which I will propose a model of working within in the future. This model will be outlined in Chapter Three.

This chapter, Reassembling the Jigsaw, starts with my attempts at exploring the exercises provided in Dr O'Connor's workshop with my own students in class. It highlights what I learned about how to deliver these exercises in terms of my own project. I will then describe how I attempted to create interest in community theatre in the wider community of Ashburton by developing 'Endless Cups of Tea', a drama workshop linked to a display in the local art gallery.

Finally I will detail the development and performance of Contact

Community Theatre with which I experimented by combining key ideas from Boal's theories with O'Connor's ideas about leadership and facilitation. As will become quickly evident, what I saw as ideal I found much harder to achieve in reality. Trying to open a space through theatre where people from different groups who are differently identified can begin to engage with each other in a way that they are perhaps unable to do outside in the community is much harder than I had anticipated. However, I remain an idealist even when confronted with the realities of the failures of these models, believing that each setback creates a pathway to a better understanding of how to create a workable model for the future.

My attendance at the two-day 'Natural High' workshop presented by Dr O'Connor had been funded by Ashburton College who were my employers at the time and I returned to the school prepared to deliver a basic scheme of lessons planned around the resource 'Jane and the Bullies'. This also gave me the opportunity to immediately put into practice the techniques I had learned and to observe the effects of those techniques, albeit in the more confined context of a high school drama classroom. As such, while this thesis is not directly concerned with issues of theatre in education, (insofar as theatre in education is as much about the work that is done in an educational context) it can be seen to overlap theatre in the common types of work and inform theatre in the community context. I will try to apply what was learned in those experiences with what I learned in the

workshop; drawing from the experiences from one context to see how I can use them in another.

As part of a school-wide initiative to increase accountability in spending, senior management required all staff members who had undergone professional development to take part in a meeting with senior management to explain how they envisaged using their new skills for the benefit of the school. Historically the Education Review Office had identified a culture of bullying within the school, which was ongoing. My suggestion was that 'Jane and the Bullies' be delivered as part of a wider school initiative that would present a number of strategies and possible solutions to the issue of bullying.

I presented the case for drama offering embodied learning and how this style would offer our students a new perspective which might prove more successful than the education models the school was following at that time. Whilst the members of the senior management team were supportive of the use of 'Jane and the Bullies' in the context of a drama classroom, they felt that the Health and Physical Education curriculum adequately addressed the issues surrounding bullying in the wider school community and that no further initiatives were necessary.

State schools in New Zealand are required to deliver content that adheres to statements of learning within a national curriculum. This national curriculum was developed by the Ministry of Education and is framed to support the neo-liberal Anglo-centred argument that

bullying is morally wrong and must not be tolerated. This framework is referred to as a 'Zero tolerance' policy towards bullying and in my opinion, would appear to support the ideology of the cultural hegemony presented by the government. I believe that by demoting the impact of bullying to one subject-specific learning area trivialises the effect it has on young people. Bolton explains how drama can be used to overcome the compartmentalisation that often occurs in schools:

Content driven curriculums separate students by academic capacity, subject choice and physical location and do not require affective change in students, drama is uniquely positioned to break down established concepts and perceptions. (Bolton, 1984, 142)

Even though the school had rejected the idea of a school wide approach to exploring the theme of bullying, it still seemed possible to provide a scheme of work that could effect change in students if I used models similar to those created by Bolton and Heathcote. As Dr O'Connor's workshop was derived from these sources, I then decided to teach his workshop, broken into a scheme of lessons, to my Year Nine drama students.

The next section describes what I learned when I taught the exercises and how this learning has helped inform my thinking around my project. Where possible I have referred to the exercises by the titles used in Chapter Two.

The introductory session

As I had a longer timeframe to work in than a two-day workshop, I decided to do a two week introductory course of games-based activities. In secondary schools it is common for students to be placed in an option class even if they have not chosen to be in it, often with students they may have worked with before. This is very different from the workshop situation I experienced where all participants were together for two whole days, had chosen to be there, but did not necessarily know each other.

The reason for choosing a two week course of games was because I wanted to develop a stronger sense of group awareness within the class. I also wanted to see what would happen if I focussed purely on the games element of drama; would this lead to a sense of group? Would I need to apply further structure to create the idea of a drama community within the class and how would the periodic nature of teaching effect the development of a sense of community?

The exercises were chosen specifically as they helped 'to develop the expressive ability of the body' (Boal, 1985, 130). I presented the students with short processing times between tasks, encouraging them to cooperate quickly to reduce any feelings of self-consciousness they might have. They were based on fast physical responses and close proximity with other in the same way as Boal had outlined in his *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. What was

interesting to me was that the response of the students indicated their enjoyment of a fast paced introductory session. This method of introduction ensured students quickly learned to move fast and cooperate with whoever happened to be nearest to then form a group, rather than picking from their friendship group.

For example the game ‘Grab, Reach, Freeze!’ is a game requiring students to create a frozen moment where all participants either grab or reach for each other. The complexity of the task is provided by the number of participants required to create each frozen image: anywhere between two to ten. When the facilitator calls out “Grab seven” for example, then students must remember who was in the group of seven, what pose they struck and where they were in relation to other groups in the room. The addition of a three second countdown adds further tension to the exercise and students are so eager to fulfil the task within the time frame, they literally grab whomever they can to be the first to complete.

It was reassuring to see that this key element to my own project work was effective in bringing the participants quickly together as a group. However the development of a sense of being a group often required constant reinforcing, which was something I had not anticipated. The periodic nature of the class meant that each session had to begin with exercises reminding the group of how to work in a drama space and to reintroduce the sense of seeing themselves as part of this specific drama group.

The implications of this for my project are twofold; firstly that longer periods of time provide an opportunity for the development of a stronger sense of being in a group. Secondly, constructing a workshop that plans for intervals of intense group activity is a beneficial way of reinforcing to the group their own sense of community. The exercises chosen must be ones that ensure members ‘play’ with a wide range of participants in the group, enabling people from different cultures to experience themselves as being part of a group and as a reminder of how they link together to form a community. If I wish to encourage the group to have a degree of self-determination concerning the direction they wish to explore about cultural identity and difference, then I, as the facilitator, must ensure they have a strong sense of community as one group first. Without this strong sense of community, the group may be split into smaller factions and resist the idea of searching for the utopia of common ground.

The behavioural contract

Having experienced the benefit of using physical exercise to create a sense of group, I now wanted to explore what the impact of creating a behavioural contract would be on the group. The process was both informative and problematic.

I presented the task to them by explaining the purpose of the document, that this would be a contract created and agreed by all

members of that group. Because of the number of drama classes that were held in the Drama room on a daily basis, it was not possible for me to retain their contract on the whiteboard. I suggested that once the group had agreed on the wording I would act as their secretary, typing up the document and stapling it to the classroom wall.

Achieving consensus on the wording of the contract took an entire lesson, which meant that a number of students were getting restive and disengaged with the learning. The contract itself looked very similar to the rules displayed in drama classrooms I had worked in before; with an emphasis placed on everyone being involved, respecting each other's work and respecting the teacher. There was a considerable time lapse between the creation of the contract and the next lesson, meaning students had effectively forgotten the significance of the document and their involvement in its creation. In my role as facilitator, it then became my job to refer to the contract as a reminder for every lesson.

Whilst the creation of the contract proved to be a useful exercise in establishing students' knowledge of the classroom rules, it did not seem to help them to recognise when they were breaking these rules. In my observation the degree of self-awareness that students have in relation to their own behaviour makes it difficult for them to self-regulate, particularly against a document, even if they helped to create it. Even though there may be an apparent agreement around the rules in a social contract, it does not necessarily mean that each student

genuinely agrees to abide by the contract. This raised a number of interesting points for my own project.

If the degree of time required to invest in the creation of a behavioural contract did not seem to provide a particularly beneficial outcome in a classroom, how would it be any different in a workshop situation? From my own experience and from my observations of Dr O'Connor, it is extremely important to have an agreed framework of working within a group, although this too might need constant negotiation as the sense of group develops. If an agreed contract of behaviour is negotiated over time, based on issues arising within the group, this might also help reinforce the group's sense of community and serve to encourage a greater sense of autonomy within that group.

The role of students in this research

The degree of success or failure my students experienced was already my responsibility as their teacher. No matter how I chose to stage the situation, my decisions would inevitably affect the way the work unfolded. In a real sense, this is not dissimilar to the power relations inherent in my leading work with immigrant cultures, but it is more emphatically so in the classroom. For this reason I chose to collect qualitative data through informal discussions with my group for my research.

By repeating my reasons for asking students to be involved in these particular lessons, I defined myself as a learner, researcher and teacher to the class. During these moments of meta- learning, I reminded students that

their ideas were informing my own work as a practitioner and as a researcher. In essence, I gave them a dual role; a Blanket Role of ‘Mantle of the Expert’, as learners responsible for providing critical feedback for a wider research topic and as learners in their own right.

Delivering the theme

The next key element I wanted to explore was the use of personal stories. The retelling of individual stories had been used to great effect by Moriarty’s group. It had also been an extremely useful starter activity in Dr O’Connor’s workshop. However, when I asked them to share personal stories, I wanted to understand what my students understood by the term ‘bullying’, so I started the class with a discussion about bullying experiences.

I asked students to put up their hands if they had ever been bullied after having first raised my own hand. I then asked students to put up their hands if they had ever bullied somebody else after having first raised my own hand again. This was my attempt to modify the bilateral delivery of the exercises developed by Dr O’Connor. By suggesting the possibility that bullies could also be bullied, I hoped to offer the view that being bullied and bullying are all part of a changing continuum. Students seemed really engaged at this part of the lesson; they were keen to share their own experiences, both as bullies and as bullied. The students’ discussion often demonstrated

pride in their ability to hurt a victim, even finding the whole event humorous.

Listening to the students recount their views in this manner made me acutely aware of the difference in response required by teacher in a classroom as compared to a facilitator in a workshop. A teacher, who must be seen to be supporting the neo-liberal stance of the school, would be expected to censure responses that seemed to oppose the approved response to bullying. However a workshop facilitator would need to create a liminal space, free from the notions of right and wrong, to ensure complete honesty in which to explore the issues raised. I had not realised how much Dr O'Connor's exercises presupposed a particular moral position until I had taught them myself.

How would I be able to deliver a workshop around cultural differences if individuals in the workshop did not agree with my utopian view that it was possible to find common ground? Was I presupposing a particular humanistic world view that all peoples believed inherently in the equal rights for others? If I was willing to release some of my power as a facilitator in order for the group to deepen their own sense of community, was I risking that the group might not find common ground? In the same way that Dr O'Connor adapted his exercises in the 'Natural High' workshop to ensure a high degree of convergence would I have to temper my activities in a similar way? Do I accept that the purpose of my workshop is to

enhance the social learning of the participants? I may provide a framework that guides them, but ultimately it is about their educative experience.

I then asked students to choose the story that had the most visual impact. Interestingly once the story had been chosen, many groups seemed to have difficulty retaining sympathy for the student playing the victim in the freeze frame. One difficulty with this exercise was how students would tend to make the victim of the story they had chosen also play the role of victims in the freeze frame. I had to intervene and specify that this was not acceptable. One group even tried to recreate a scene that was a thinly veiled excuse to pick on a member of their group who had willingly volunteered to play the role of victim, a role not too dissimilar to the role assigned to him by that group outside the classroom.

In Boal's use of Image Theatre, he removes the oppressed from the image and empowers them with the role of director; this is a key element to my own project. By witnessing how students misused the freeze frames, I was able to appreciate how important it is to ensure that the teller of the story is given the means to control the image created.

The introduction of the 'Jane and the Bullies' image was greeted with a greater degree of interest from the majority of the girls than the boys. Comments indicated that the students' focus had been diverted by the poor quality of the cartoon graphics, so that they became more

concerned about how silly it looked. This focus shift became such a preoccupation that they found it hard to identify with the themes in the image. Using an image has the potential to provide opportunities for a wide range of opinions and attitudes. Even such a negative response from the students proved useful in that it gave me an insight into why it was important to ensure that if I use images in my own workshop, they are relevant to that individual group.

The size of the class meant that students had to share photocopies of the image, making it difficult to ensure all students were fully engaged with the observation exercise. This suggested to me that in order to ensure I can facilitate a workshop effectively I may need to set a limit on the number of participants allowed.

Students proved more engaged in the exercises where they had to recreate their own still image exercises based on 'Jane and the Bullies', but had difficulty maintaining the strict discipline required to recreate and hold the still images they had developed. Students found it relatively easy to create 'Spoken Thoughts' and a 'Vocal Collage' that represented each of the roles in the Frozen Image. I chose to frame this exercise so that students had a short time limit for completion, combined with an expectation that they perform their creation to the rest of the group. The increased accountability ensured students actually created the work and provided a performance opportunity that most students seemed to thoroughly enjoy. These

exercises provided the early creation of scripts, which I felt might prove useful in my own workshops.

When students were asked to reframe their work with a genre, it quickly became apparent that they lacked basic knowledge of many of the genres available, limiting their performance choices. When students did recognise a genre it became clear that few had enough depth of understanding of the conventions associated with that genre to manipulate their scripts to fit. If they had a strong understanding of the genre, they would attempt to change the content of their scripts from the original intent to resemble more closely the story lines they associated with that genre. However, once they had grasped the concept, the students generally really enjoyed watching and performing in genre. This exercise was so much fun to perform as a participant, I felt it was worth investigating the problems around the exercise to see how I could adapt the delivery of the genres and apply it in my own workshops.

The main concern was around the clarification of knowledge of a genre and how to adapt scripts to fit. If, by negotiating with each group, we could create a list of genres that participants were familiar with, then this exercise would have the potential to offer an entertaining and educative insight into specific cultural styles. This would provide a further opportunity to explore cultural differences and from there, draw some universal themes, bringing the group together within common ground.

A similar opportunity for analysis arose when the Blanket Role of School Counsellor was bestowed on the group. A key element to remember with any workshop is not to assume knowledge concerning a role. In this particular example some students had no idea about the manner and questioning style that counsellors used, whilst other students who had been to see a school counsellor were unable to generalise typical counsellor behaviours and could only describe their experiences by referencing personal experiences. So whilst Blanket Role can be a useful exercise to deepen understanding around a situation, it is important to ensure that participants come to some agreement about how they intend to use the role in the context of their own learning.

Teacher in role

By contrast the convention of Teacher in Role proved to be far more successful. I was able to navigate class discussion by the judicious application of a prop as a signifier, allowing me to move in and out of role and ensure class discussion remained within the specific framework of exploring bullying.

Students particularly enjoyed witnessing me in the role of a disengaged teenage girl who was particularly uncommunicative. I advised the group that the only effective method of discovering important information about the bullying event was to find a way of communicating with the girl that would encourage her to talk freely. As

a group they had to work hard at framing questions that the girl would answer. As Teacher in Role, I was able to respond quite rudely if the students in their blanket role appeared thoughtless or inconsiderate with their questions. This particular role reversal combined with a change in status encouraged the group to take on a more responsible Blanket Role. The choice of the Blanket Role as parents or concerned teachers, where students had a greater range of knowledge about these roles may also have allowed them to explore more subtle varieties of questioning as information gatherers.

The use Blanket Role and Teacher in Role are important tools, as they can help embed learning through imagining the thoughts and emotions of people in a situation dramatically. Their effectiveness depends on careful framing and reframing by the facilitator or teacher, which requires a high degree of skill and flexibility. These are the skills that I will need to develop for my own theatrical explorations. One of the questions this work has raised for me is what roles transcend cultural and social differences? And whether, if such universal exist, these roles would still be subject to different cultural and social perceptions? This is something I would like to offer as a question to be explored in my workshops.

‘Bullying’ has become an umbrella term for a wide range of behaviours, ranging from social isolation, texting, name-calling through to physical abuse. Whilst the workshop provided by Dr O’Connor fulfilled the criteria established by the educational

hegemony in New Zealand it was hampered by fulfilling these criteria. No matter how well presented the work was it seemed to reinforce a socio-educational schism between the work developed with the students in the classroom and their behaviours and attitudes about 'bullying'. Many students continued to exhibit bullying behaviours whilst identifying themselves as being bullied.

Dr O'Connor provided an excellent workshop, but the application of this workshop within a school framework inhibited the effectiveness of the learning. Through my own application of his workshop in class, I came to understand why it was necessary to move out of the classroom environment if I wished to deliver a workshop. If I wished to create an environment where participants would feel able to explore cultural differences in a respectful and meaningful manner, then it had to be in a time and place that would allow sustained learning for interested participants.

The workshop

My experiences of using Process Drama in the classroom had led me to the realisation that the most appropriate format to deliver my ideas around theatre as a platform for common ground was a workshop. This section will discuss my experiences of working in the local community of Ashburton. It describes how my desire to bring together a diverse group of people from the increasingly multicultural groups who had recently arrived there encouraged me to create my

own workshop and what happened when I decided to deliver this workshop in the local community.

Ashburton, a historically white monocultural community with strong links to the farming industries was experiencing a rapidly increasing influx of migrants from the Philippines, Tonga, Samoa, Zimbabwe and the UK during the period in which I was planning the workshop. I had observed that in the high school each group tended to remain segregated by ethnicity with little social interaction across the diverse ethnic and cultural groups, which seemed to mirror the wider community. There was a correspondingly wide array of support networks aimed specifically at each ethnic or cultural group. However there had been no organisation set up with the express purpose of developing relations between the diverse ethnic and cultural groups that constitute the whole community of Ashburton. Freire explains this lack of provision as a symptom of an oppressive society:

In community development projects the more a region or area is broken down into 'local communities' without the study of these communities both as totalities in themselves and as parts of another totality—which in turn is part of a still larger totality—the more alienation is intensified. And the more alienated people are, the easier it is to divide them and keep them divided. (Freire, 1970, 123)

How might a research project that could establish a link across the diverse cultural ethnic and cultural groups in Ashburton, be beneficial? And if it was beneficial, how would I go about convincing people of this? If communities in Ashburton chose to establish internal support networks how might my research project be viewed? Would the communities in Ashburton feel there was any need for a project that tried to connect diverse groups together? And how would the impact of using theatre affect peoples' view of the project?

In order to gain access to these support networks I needed to involve the local Council with the idea of a community theatre project taking place in Ashburton. I hoped that their support might raise the profile of the project and so pique local interest. Given Freire's description that the very purpose of community development projects was not to develop links between groups, it would seem counter-intuitive to make the local Council my first point of contact. However, I found them to be most agreeable to my proposal once I had presented a brief outline of the project. As the councillors discussed my proposal, it became apparent that their perspective on local community needs had a different focus to my own. The councillors identified one group that they were particularly concerned about; the Samoan workers who worked at the C.M.P. factory, (Canterbury Meat Packers, located just north of Ashburton), expressing fear that increases in racial tension might negatively affect their businesses.

This was as interesting as it was problematic. The councillors were

interested in seeing if my project could be used to help resolve a perceived threat from one group of individuals, whilst I was proposing to increase awareness of issues of culture amongst all ethnic and cultural groups in Ashburton. Freire explains that this is an identifying feature of hegemonic society, 'One of the characteristics of oppressive cultural action... is the emphasis on a focalized view of problems rather than on seeing them as dimensions of a totality' (Freire, 1970 123).

Was it possible to work in a way that acknowledged their concerns, without detracting from my own purposes? How might I find a way to create common ground with this group? I decided to investigate the option of working with C.M.P. to see if they were interested in liaising with me about a community project. When I spoke to them it became apparent that C.M.P. had not identified a need for such a project and had no interest in being involved in any type of theatre workshop.

The experience underpinned my developing understanding for the need to clarify the parameters of my research project and seek out participants who were willing to be involved. Although outside members felt they had identified a clear need for a theatre project within an organisation, if the organisation did not perceive the need themselves, then offering a workshop was a waste of time. The organisation itself needed to invite me in if and when they felt a need.

Only then would I be able to develop a workshop. I had to work with people who were interested in doing theatre.

With this realisation I decided my next move would be to set up a Community Theatre Group, which I hoped, would provide the foundation for offering theatre workshops for groups in Ashburton. I name it Contact Community Theatre and on 21st May it received \$500.00 grant from Creative NZ at the offices of Ashburton Local Council. The local free newspapers ran promotional articles to raise awareness in the community that a theatre project was going to be developed.

On 19th June, Contact Community Theatre sent out letters inviting any company or N.G.O. (Non-governmental organisations) that might have an interest in theatre or had involvement with diverse ethnic and cultural groups, to meet at the Ashburton Art Gallery on 8th July. The invitations explained that the purpose of the Contact Community Theatre was to offer a theatre-based project to members from the different cultural and ethnic groups within Ashburton. The aim of the project was also clearly stated; that participants would explore cultural differences and similarities in a performative context. The letters also explained that this would be accomplished through the development of a performance dialogue leading to the creation of a devised piece of theatre. This would then be performed to the family and friends of the participants, as well as the wider community.

None of the organisations contacted responded to the letters and nobody appeared at the Art Gallery. The curator Kathryn Mitchell, felt that this was because the culture on Ashburton was one where ‘They don’t like experts, outsiders - they think they can do it themselves’.

This complete lack of response forced me reflect on the possible reasons for my failure. If no one came, then no one had any interest at all in the project, not even to ask questions. This would suggest that organisations in Ashburton either did not recognise any need in connecting with other organisations in the search for common ground or had no interest. Perhaps these organisations felt that they already had other methods for liaising with each other? The fact that members of the Ashburton community who had an interest in Performing Arts also chose not to come suggested that they too had no desire to explore common ground with diverse ethnic and cultural groups either. I reviewed my advertising strategy.

I decided that I needed to present my project directly to the people in Ashburton. Boal quotes Brecht when he suggests that a performer who wishes to make change should perform, ‘in the neighbourhoods he should show his images of social life to the workers who are interested in changing that social life, since they are its victims’ (Boal, 2006, 105).

I discussed my new plan with Torika Patterson, a health promoter for the Pacific Island Project, over coffee. Torika mentioned that some Samoans chose to move to Ashburton with the desire to avoid the

strong expectation of community involvement prevalent in the larger expatriate Samoan communities found in Christchurch. Torika suggested I contact phone Louisa Fruen, Minister at the Samoan church in Ashburton. On the 14th July Louisa invited me to speak about the project at her church, however Louisa warned me that if my intention was to involve Samoan women I would have to be prepared to answer many questions first as they were known for being very modest. There were no questions.

On 15th July I attended the ‘Ashburton District Social Wellbeing Strategy’ presentation with talks from various non-governmental organisations and local interested parties, to see if I could get any clues or ideas of how to present my project in a way that would interest people. On the 17th July I met Raewyn Barclay, the community social worker for the Newcomers network. Raewyn’s role had been created specifically to help new migrants settle into the Ashburton community. She acted as the liaison person for any organisations that she felt would help migrants with, what was essentially, the process of acculturation.

Recently, the Filipino community had been the subject of letters in the Ashburton Guardian that were both racist and derogatory and she was keen to advertise the fact that over 200 members of this cultural group went to give blood at the Christmas appeal to help the rest of Ashburton. She was also further concerned that changes in the New Zealand immigration policy had adversely affected some Filipino

families by making them homeless and jobless. Raewyn wondered if I could perhaps create some sort of theatre piece that might highlight these issues to the wider community of Ashburton. Whilst this appeared to be a worthy objective, I was beginning to recognise a pattern. I would have difficulty finding a way to create a theatre piece with community members who had not identified this need, unless the community expressly invited me to work in this manner, in which case I would be able to create a workshop with them. Freire, quoting Mao Zedong, points out that, 'All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned.' (Freire, 1970, 74)

If the Filipino community were not interested in creating such an event then its contents would appear irrelevant to them. Raewyn and I had both recognised the racism within the established community towards the Filipinos and other newly arrived ethnic groups. My idea of community seemed to be in contrast with Raewyn's, however. I believed people from different ethnic and cultural could develop a theatrical dialogue on equal terms and explore their differences together.

Raewyn's solution was to explore possibilities of advertising the good deeds done by the Filipino community to the white hegemonic community of Ashburton, believing that such an action might ameliorate their hostile attitude to towards this ethnic group. It is often difficult for individuals to understand that their own experiences

may be part of a wider phenomenon, Freire explains this is, ‘When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality’ (Freire, 1970, 85). Upon reflection I realised that if Raewyn and I could have agreed that such racist slurs were symptomatic of a wider problem affecting Ashburton, we may have been able to contact the leaders from the various ethnic and cultural communities and invite them to discuss this issue.

Once there was recognition that this was part of a wider community problem, perhaps then I could have offered to explore the issue theatrically amongst the various communities. In *The Rainbow of Desire* Boal explained the importance of moving from the individual experience to a universal understanding in the application of theatre as a tool for social change:

The *Theatre of Oppressed* is the theatre of the first person plural. It is absolutely vital to begin with an individual account, but if it does not pluralise of its own accord we must go beyond it by means of analogical induction, so that may be studied by all the participants. (Boal, 1995, 45)

This thesis explores the problem faced by someone like me, which is how to try to persuade people to create theatre with others from a range of different ethnic and cultural groups? The issue remained to

find a way to raise awareness about the difficulties confronting migrant groups in a manner that would make the work I wished to develop relevant to *all* members of the Ashburton community.

I was still trying to find a venue that would be appropriate to work in. Raewyn had mentioned that Hakatere Marae were keen to open their space for use by the wider community in Ashburton. I approached the committee and asked if the Marae would be interested in hosting a theatre project, and they agreed.

Hakatere Marae lies on the outskirts of Ashburton, near to the business park and was built as a ‘maata waka’ marae set up for groups predominantly in an urban area away from their own traditional iwi robe or district. Whilst I had a venue, I was no further forward in finding likely participants for my project. I decided I would need to create a workshop around a specific event that might entice members of the public to join in.

On Sunday 20th September 2009 I organised a workshop called ‘Endless Cups of Tea’ at the Ashburton Art Gallery. I arranged the workshop to coincide with the exhibition ‘Ey! Iran’, an exhibition of contemporary Iranian photography exploring the issues associated with identity, gender and social restrictions, which was touring New Zealand. It was a coup for Kathryn the curator to acquire it for display in Ashburton and it seemed a great opportunity for me to advertise my Contact Community Theatre project. Kathryn made a huge effort with the advertising and was kind enough to include my workshop in all

the advertising of the exhibition – we even got a mention in ‘The Press’, a newspaper with the largest circulation in the South Island of New Zealand.

I developed a workshop that complemented some of the themes explored in the exhibition, the title was a reference to a comment in the accompanying literature explaining how Iranian men filled the hours in their day by drinking ‘Endless Cups of Tea’ and I hoped it would resonate with a Kiwi audience as much as it did with me. Whilst I had not considered the history of tea as a metaphor for a historically colonialist force, it may have emerged in the workshop.

In this thesis I have suggested that the creation of a theatrical platform would bring together people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups to discover common ground. The workshop at the Ashburton Art Gallery seemed a perfect introduction for looking at themes based on culture and identity. I developed the workshop with an open invitation to come and play and explore the idea of cultural identity through the exploration of props as significant and as signifiers within culture, in this case scarves and teacups to signpost a pathway into a piece of devised theatre. I chose to use these props as they echoed the props used in the central image of the poster advertising the ‘Ey! Iran’ exhibition and were also in common use amongst the people living in Ashburton.

I hoped that the apparent cultural dissonance felt by people who looked at the images in the exhibition juxtaposed with the

ordinariness of a scarf and a teacup, which they were used to seeing in daily life, would instigate a performative dialogue about the significance of these objects in a cultural context. From there I hoped that this would lead to participants finding some areas of common ground between the people in Ashburton who had come to the workshop and the people shown in the images in the exhibition. The response to the workshop came as a surprise to me, only one person arrived and then went to view the other exhibition on show, no one arrived to view 'Ey! Iran' or participate in the workshop. Undaunted I repeated the exercise a week later, with the same response.

The effectiveness of employing community based theatre projects for creating performative explorations around issues that have been identified by a group within a community has well established antecedents. Having done the research and been involved in workshops that used theatre for social purposes, I was convinced that if I just kept experimenting with my delivery I too would be to develop a workshop that could use theatre as a platform for common ground between diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

Augusto Boal used participatory theatre to problematise socio-political and cultural issues within a performative framework. He refers to 'culture theatre', in which cultural groups who coexist in the same community are encouraged to perform plays that originate from the cultural resources of the other cultural group they co-exist with, so that, 'people from one homogeneous culture [try] to find themselves

in the work of people from another homogeneous culture' (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994, 29). To me he seemed to be exploring the idea of identity both from within a culture and outside a culture.

By raising the question of how much of who we are is defined by the resources we use, I felt that his idea of searching for common ground within something that would appear to be culturally disparate could open the way for my own practice-based theatre project. By using objects that were associated with a specific culture I would be creating an apparent cultural dissonance through the use of these objects in the photographs in the 'Ey! Iran' exhibition. I hoped that this would be present workshop participants with an opportunity to find moments where the uncommon experience might be transformed into a shared common experience and the common experience might be transformed into the uncommon experience.

Augusto Boal stated in *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, 'the act of transforming is transformative' (2006, 74), and I hoped the richness and complexity of the transformations that occurred in the cultural encounters within this workshop would make them transformative for the participants, by making them revisit the objects of the scarf and the teacup in a way that would question what culture and identity meant to them.

I also hoped that sharing the joy of discovery within a playful, embodied context would create a brief sense of community between the participants. Victor Turner identified these experiential moments

as ‘spontaneous communitas’, the moments when ‘Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous communitas become totally absorbed into a single synchronised, fluid event’ (1982, 48). If participants shared these moments within the context of finding common ground between diverse ethnic and cultural groups then the transformative nature of these experiences as referred to by Boal may lead to glimpses of a transformed society.

The link between creating theatre and creating communities is therefore very strong, the suggestion that this process has a transformative quality for the participants involved with the possibility of that transformation edging towards the utopian, were all reasons why I chose to create the ‘Endless Cups of Tea’ workshop. Additional to this, the teacup and scarf from the Ey! Iran exhibition, were significant for their use as signposts into exploring cultural context, which might have allowed the participants an opportunity to discover common ground; the point of the practise-based research for my thesis.

Once again, no one came. The exhibition did not attract many visitors itself either. Clearly the Ashburton Community had little interest neither in exhibits that explored different cultures nor in creating theatre around them. Researching Freire gave me my clearest indication of why both the gallery owner and I were perhaps failing to get a positive response to our work:

Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account (except as mere objects of their actions) the *men-in-a-situation* to whom their program was ostensibly directed. (Freire, 1970, 75, italics in original)

He seems to be making the point that working with a community means responding to the ideas and concerns of the members themselves, not coming up with ideas based on a belief that this is what the community might need.

It seemed to me that there was little opposition to the cultural hegemony based on white, male Judeo-Christian beliefs in Ashburton and that I was suggesting a solution around cultural parity that no one was interested in. Yet I knew it was a problem, I had witnessed the lack of communication in my school and in the community. How might I raise awareness amongst the various communities to even viewing that there was a problem to be solved in the first place? In *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* Boal explains:

It is imperative to work where art is not bought and sold, where art is alive, where we are all artists - in the places where people live: in the streets, the *favelas*, the encampments of the MST, in the unions, in the churches. (2006, 60)

For me, as a teacher, this meant a re-evaluation of how I intended to encourage members of the community of Ashburton to participate in an experimental theatrical research-based project. I realised that the relationship that I had as a teacher in Ashburton College with students from Ashburton, was the one that would be most likely to offer an opportunity for finding participants who might be interested in creating theatre, and have an understanding of the problem in the community and this became the focus of my next theatrical experiment, described in the following part of this chapter.

Contact Community Theatre

At 7:00pm on 23rd June 2010, Contact Community Theatre performed ‘Can you hear me?’ in front of an audience of family and friends at the Ashburton Resource Centre. The piece was devised and performed by the six members of the community theatre group.

In this section I will discuss how Contact Community Theatre was developed. I will also describe the participants in terms of their culture and ethnicities and how they were linked to each other by a wide range of connections, plus explain the issues I encountered in attempting to find an appropriate venue.

The final section details how I guided the participants to devise a performance, using exercises and ideas from my research and practical experimentations. It also records my reflections about the use of these exercises, exploring the successes and failures in the light

of my future model. It also looks at the response from the audience before summarising what I learned from these experiences.

Looking at all I had learned so far I decided to target students who were most likely source of be interested in the issues I wished to raise. This proved to be a combination of drama students and students from our ESOL unit, (English for Speakers of Other Languages). I placed posters around the school inviting students to come to a youth theatre event.

A recent visit with the ESOL unit to Lake Tekapo, had reminded me of the lack of cultural literacy within our local community. Two female Muslim students had been advised that if they wanted to swim in the hot pools, they could hire swimming costumes at the front office. However the style of the available swimwear was too revealing. Both girls were too embarrassed to explain the problem to the woman at the desk, who could not understand why they were so upset.

The bus driver on the trip, a local man who had been driving for Ashburton College for years, kept making racist comments to two of the Japanese girls, commenting about their colour and mannerisms. He excused his comments by exclaiming 'They know I'm only joking!' If I could find a way for young people to be able to express their own definitions of themselves as simultaneously maintaining separate cultural identities as well as being part of the New Zealand

community, then perhaps this would provide them with the confidence to deal with such incidents.

An important principle I learned was the choice of space. The Hakatere Marae was too far away from town to be accessible for people without a car. I also felt that holding a theatre project in my own school would make the whole experience too similar to a drama lesson in school. Raewyn suggested I take a look at a new café the Council was attempting to set up for the exclusive use of teenagers. The location for the ‘Youth Café’, (the set for the planned rehearsals) was an old pizza café that was currently being refurbished. There was a side area that connected the front area to the toilets that we could use. The area was carpeted but did not give much privacy and the whole café was very cold. However, we were granted free access and no rent. I felt that as the space was going to be a Youth Café, a place designed by and for young people that it might have positive associations for potential participants.

Contact Community Theatre met at 7:00-9:30pm, Wednesday nights. Its core members were; Janice who is Indo Fijian, Malakai who is Fijian, Anni who is German, Ranga who is Zimbabwean, Helene who is Anglo-Seychelloise and Natasha who is Filipino-New Zealander. Annie was an exchange student; all the others were children from first generation immigrants. All of the participants shared the experience of migrating from another country and had experience of negotiating between the cultures that their parents

brought with them from their country of birth and the culture of New Zealand. Other members included Shamiana, an Indo-Fijian who had to leave when her arranged marriage was finalised and Ulli, a Ukrainian who decided that although he did not want to be part of the performance he wanted to offer his support.

Interestingly two other participants Georgia, originally from the U.K., and Jack, a boy who had been born and brought up in Ashburton, came with an expectation that this project was similar to the Children's Theatre in Ashburton. When they realised that this project was concerned with creating a piece of devised theatre based on diverse ethnic and cultural experiences they both decided to leave the group. This was an interesting development for me, particularly as Jack proved to be the only local New Zealand born participant, both were drama students at Ashburton College and had a strong interest in performance, however from further discussions about their experiences it seemed to be the lack of a script that they found unappealing. It was worth noting that some potential participants will be discouraged from being involved in a project because it requires them to use devised theatre techniques.

The introductory sessions of each workshop allowed the participants to get to know each other, often they would chat informally whilst waiting for all the members to arrive. Often I would give at least two of the participants a lift to and from the workshop, where they would chat amongst each other. These casual sessions

proved invaluable for exploring the common threads that held the group together.

By the end of the project the group had discovered the following about each of their members. Ranga, Malakai, Anni and Helene were all students from my drama class. Natasha and Janice were friends with my daughter, Helene. Shamiana was a friend of Janice and Ulli knew Malakai. Janice, Natasha and Shamiana had all wanted to take drama as a subject in school but had not been allowed to by their parents. All the participants had parents who viewed education as extremely important for their children's education. Ranga's parents had been forced to leave Zimbabwe due to the increase political conflict, which was also true for Ulli. Most of Malakai's family were still in Fiji, which was the same for Shamiana and Janice. Anni was away from home during her exchange. Natasha's mum was Filipino and her dad a New Zealander from Ashburton. Both Helene and I came from the UK, her father was Seychellois and I am English. Each member of the group expressed a sense of 'otherness' from the majority of students in Ashburton College and the community of Ashburton. I felt I shared some of their experiences, albeit with some differences. I also consider myself an immigrant in New Zealand, with a daughter of mixed ethnicity in high school at the same time. This meant that, although I was in a privileged position relative to many of my students and the people in the communities I wanted to serve, I also could empathise with their social predicaments. By

setting up a workshop I had created an opportunity for them to discover common ground even before we had developed any drama; this socialising was at least as important as the more formal aspects of the workshop.

Occasionally when there were only one or two members they just like talking to each other. In the process they were creating their own Contact Community Theatre culture. Their behaviour corresponded with Kymlicka's definition of culture that it is 'the distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group association' (1995, 18). The way the group were creating their own culture offered 'glimpses of how people might be together in a more respectful, care-full, loving community (2005, 64) as Jill Dolan described it.

What was of most interest for my research was the liminality of these aspirational moments, which proved to be as powerful in developing the group culture as the drama exercises were.

As we approached winter, the conditions in the café deteriorated the cold and the concrete floor made many of the physical exercises hard to perform. After another visit to Raewyn, she suggested the Resource Centre further down the same street. The Resource Centre turned out to be an old shop front that had been converted into a series of odd shaped rooms connected by a labyrinthine staircase. At the top of the building was a private room thickly carpeted and with heat pumps. Just before reaching the room in which we performed we would pass a small utilitarian kitchen.

The Resource Centre provided rental accommodation for any non-profit organisations that offered services to the Ashburton community. It described itself as ‘a one stop shop for services’, which included Birthrite, relationship services and services for the elderly. The room that we used also hosted a religious group. Our rehearsals would always start with the ritual of the stacking of the chairs and the removal of the large wooden altar.

On reflection I realise that this ritual played an important role in creating the space for drama. It signalled in the real sense, that a time and space was being created for drama to take place; we were developing our own liminality. Symbolically we were removing the traces of what had gone before and as we worked together to create this space, it signalled our intention to work together to create drama.

The ritual was relaxing, it was a practical exercise that had to be done before the ‘thinking’ started, a pre warm up phase, and most importantly everyone knew how it worked. This reminded me of the ritualistic nature of the performance by *Te Rakau Hua o te Wao Tapu* and how it gave the audience an idea of the shape of the show. This gave me another key idea for my final project. Using rituals would help frame the workshop both physically and creatively, providing a sense of the order of events for everyone involved. How might this shared set of expectations for participants help them to establish a sense of stability? And how would the establishment of such tangible ground rules— a to-do list— in common act as a first step towards

creating a sense of commonality in the more abstract ways that I am seeking?

The routine for our group was that we would meet up at the rehearsal space and start with a number of activities to warm up. These warm up activities were often physical theatre games taken from the first section of *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* by Boal. I found them useful for loosening up minds and muscles.

Next I would introduce improvisation exercises, which helped to develop participants' techniques in spontaneity of thought and movement. This proved to be a useful introductory routine as it grounded all the participants in the liminal drama space, reminding us of how we interacted in this drama space. The constant connections through touch and movement, re-engaged each member of the group with each other. Re-establishing a sense of play reminded us that we were a group who had chosen to be together to create drama. From here we would begin to look at devising scenes.

Developing the show

I had introduced a series of cards that had the following words on them - mum, dad, grandparents, friends, girl/boyfriend, siblings, belongings, pets, school, country - and I asked the group to put them in order of importance in pairs. This exercise was an adaptation of Freire's use of images to explore how participants responded to the codifications they associated to the written roles.

From my knowledge of the members of the group I was able to tailor the words to ensure each participant had an opportunity to associate themselves with many of the roles on the cards. The cards generated a great deal of discussion, particularly about where to place parents, girl/boyfriend and friends. Often participants would refer to particular scenarios, as an explanation for their decisions. As their responses indicated that they believed that priorities changed dependant on any given situation, I then directed them to describe all the roles they felt they played in life.

It was at this stage that Shamiana commented that she had to leave the group as she was about to be married. She explained that as it was her role to be a good daughter, this meant that she had agreed to her parents' choice for her future husband and would soon be returning to Fiji for her arranged marriage.

The discussion created by Shamiana's announcement about her forthcoming marriage developed into a theatrical exploration of the question of how roles could dictate behaviours. The group discussed how some cultures seemed to have very specific expectations about behaviours associated with a role, which they felt was extremely restrictive. They came to the conclusion that all cultures had expectations around roles within society, though it ranged in how strictly these expectations were applied.

This section of the performance raised an interesting issue for me. To me, Shamiana's experience was an example of a society choosing

to ignore a woman's right to exercise freedom to choose her own life partner. The group related her situation back to their own life experiences around the expectations of others. They had found an area of common ground, which differed from the issue I had identified. The implication for any future work I choose to develop is that a facilitator must respect the theatrical explorations chosen by the group. In this particular instance the group preferred to explore their separation from supportive family members in the process of moving to a new country.

The group members discussed how each of them would feel about adapting their behaviour to fulfil the requirements of differing cultural norms. We wanted to explore this theatrically. The result became our second scene in the performance (see Appendix); 'Lost in clothing'. The participants wanted to explore how they sometimes felt their true identity was slowly being submerged beneath layers of expectations, admonishments, criticisms and control from other family members. The clothing began to symbolise this loss of identity as the layers were piled on. It also restricted the movement of the performer as they become more weighed down in clothing and by extension, expectations.

It was Janice who offered the end of the scene by explaining how she felt her grandmother was the only one who accepted her for herself. This is why, in the scene, it is Janice who comes in playing her grandmother and removes all the layers, releasing the 'true'

person beneath. Janice's performance decision to embody her grandmother resonated strongly with the group. The theme was touched upon again in the later scene 'A long way away'. Members of the group identified a strong connection with family who were separated from them, either because of distance or age.

When Janice represented her grandmother it was a theatrical exploration of a connection existing between two cultural groups separated by a generation that shared common ground; being part of the same family.

The making of 'Mala's teacup' (Scene One in the performance) came from the provocation I gave the group based around childhood memories. Malakai told the story about his fascination with his mother's favourite teacup and the group elected to perform this scene. I began to type what they were saying to each other as they were developing the scene, as I thought it would be useful raw material for my thesis. Upon rereading it showed how they problem solved together as well as demonstrating the unique roles each of them had adopted in the group. When I read it out loud, the group decided they wanted to use this as the basis of their script. I introduced the concept of 'performing (the act of) performing' to them and they had a discussion around this idea.

The group wanted to play with the audience, and liked the idea of how they could rewind and repeat action, moving in and out of

storytelling and rehearsal mode, and using the experience of metaxis as a reflective tool.

What was so useful about this first project exercise was how it signalled clearly to the participants that the show we were going to create was very much about them and their thoughts. All of the members became very involved in the scriptwriting and gained confidence as the process continued. This was an important moment for me as it showed me how I could signal ideas and suggestions that would facilitate the work of the group, without leading the group in one previously determined direction. This encouraged the group members to have a greater sense of autonomy around the work they created.

A key moment in this process was how this sense of autonomy strengthened each member's sense of being part of a group called Contact Community Theatre. As part of this recognised group called Contact Community Theatre, each group member was becoming more confident about contributing to the performance in a way they felt best reflected the goals of the group. My role as facilitator involved acting as a secretary, keeping a record their own decisions and then reflecting their ideas back to. In this way we developed our praxis. As rehearsals continued, this praxis helped further define the work of the group. Through this work, the group discovered the sense of a collective identity; they were becoming a cultural group.

Natasha provided the stimulus for the scene 'Chicken'. I was exploring with the group the idea of trying to hold a conversation whilst everyone was speaking different languages as I wanted to see if they could develop different cues or gestures to follow a theme. Natasha said it reminded her of how her mother would sit and gossip in Filipino with her friends. Often they would be discussing Natasha right in front of her, knowing she could not understand them at all. Natasha said it made her feel very uncomfortable as they would often say her name, pause and then laugh together. I suggested we try this as a scene and as we were rehearsing Malakai decided to do chicken impressions. Helene suggested this would be a good way to end the scene as it suggested that the women gradually transformed into clucking, fussing chickens. When Malakai pointed out that the different languages worked because most of the time he didn't think the women actually listened to each other, we had the basic idea for the scene.

The scene indicated a growing confidence in the group to find a way to create performance from ideas that they played with. I realised that these workshop participants were exploring how the voice of the teenager wanted to be heard. In terms of diversity of culture they seemed to have found a way through their identification as a group of teenagers creating theatre in New Zealand, whilst attempting to use the theatre as a way of identifying themselves and in doing so

rejecting many of the roles and stereotypes they felt had been placed upon them.

The provocations which interested the group the most were all based around the struggle they felt they went through to have their voices heard. Despite my view that we were not creating theatre of any great depth, these students had found their common ground between them. Perhaps the most challenging principle for me to learn as a facilitator would be the negotiation between how a group chose to use theatre as a platform for common ground between diverse ethnic and common groups with my own interpretation of what this might look like. To understand that sometimes the process of devising, and thereby giving people a voice is about letting people express where they are at, before looking to move forward.

Unlike the other scenes, scene four came directly out of a rehearsal exercise called 'The Clayman'. This is a physical exercise that is designed to improve communication between two participants, developing the skills of peripheral vision and muscle isolation. The group enjoyed this exercise so much, finding it mesmerising to watch, they wanted to find a way to make it part of their production. When one of the participants tried to talk to their friend, who was performing the exercise, they were completely ignored. This sparked the idea of a young girl feeling ignored by her mother. The mother continues to shape the external image of her daughter, without seeming to hear the girl as she calls out to her mother.

My own reflection about this exercise is that once the group had a sense of what they wanted to communicate, they began to see possibilities within quite generic exercises. What this means for my project is that once a workshop participants identify themselves as a group, then they work fairly cohesively to create drama. The difficulty for me is how to get them to this stage. I feel I was very lucky that this group meshed so well, perhaps due to the small number and the high number of commonalities they discovered amongst themselves. How would I negotiate the creation of a group with a larger number of participants who did not necessarily have so many things in common?

The final scene, 'A long way away' was the most interesting and the most problematic. In our discussion around memories from childhood Janice had explained how when she was young, her parents had to leave her to find work. Until she was five Janice had been brought up by her grandmother and they were still very close. Jane described how much she missed her grandma, who was still in Fiji, but how much she loved the calls. This struck a chord of recognition with the group as most of the participants had extended family that lived in their country of origin.

The problem was how to use this idea for a performance. Janice's conversations with her grandma were obviously private. The participants discussed the idea of taping a grandparent which would help suggest distance between the performer and their grandparent to

the audience. For extra distance, we chose to combine comments that everyone had offered, rather than use direct quotes from Janice's grandma. When Helene questioned why the script was in English, I knew we had to find someone who could speak Fijian. Torika Patterson, my friend who was the Health Promoter for the Pacific Island Project, was asked to help us.

Out of all the scenes in the final show, I felt that scene contained the strongest element of what I had been wishing to explore in the workshop. It also raised the greatest problem around the ethical use of primary resources. In her docu-theatre style, Anna Deavere Smith delivered her shows using only the words of the people she interviewed. Her philosophy around acting is that it is:

The spirit of acting is the travel from the self to the other... If we inhabit the speech pattern of another, and walk in the speech of another, we could find the individuality of the other and experience that individuality viscerally. (1993, p. xxvii)

I wanted to find a way that we could experiment with this without exploiting an intimate moment. Having to solve the problem of how to respect the privacy of the relationship between two family members, while remaining true to the content, gave me some ideas about how I might be able to manipulate strategies more effectively to create more thought provoking scenes such as this in future projects. The audience, like Malakai, could not see Grandma's face, but they

could follow the sense of Grandma's words through Malakai's responses. There was such a universal humanity in the emotions expressed behind the simple questions around socks and keeping warm. At the same time the use of the taped voice reminded the audience that this conversation was happening between two people who were many miles apart. Those in the audience who could understand Fijian had an extra depth of understanding with the situation.

Watching their responses, I wondered if, as the families watched this piece of theatre that problematised their children's situation about being between cultures, that perhaps it would raise issues about their own situations in this culture. If I could find a way create connections with these people through theatre would I have used theatre to create a platform for common ground between diverse and ethnic groups?

The choice of lullabies as transitions between scenes was again developed from conversations about childhood memories. Helene had sung a lullaby from the Seychelles she remembered me singing to her as a child. The lyrics, in Creole, tell the baby to go to the sleep or the wild dog will eat her. Helene had always been struck by the macabre nature of the song. Ranga then taught everyone 'The baboon with the big red bottom', a lullaby from Zimbabwe. As the discussion continued Anni mentioned how she knew the song 'Frere Jacques' in German as well as English, when Janice and Malakai also recognised

the tune, they decided that this common link must be reflected somewhere in the show.

The use of the lullabies was an interesting choice for transitions, practically it allowed the actors to move around the stage and prepare for the next scene in front of the audience. They acted as reminders to the audience how each member of Contact Community Theatre was from a different culture and yet shared the common experiences of being young and growing up in the space between two, or sometimes three, cultures. In the same way that 'A long way away' had achieved a point of recognition, the use of the lullabies seemed to elicit a strong response from the audience. Perhaps even, participants had achieved a moment of spontaneous *communitas*, which 'tends to be inclusive - some might call it generous' (Turner, 1982, 51).

On the night of the performance I had asked each participant to bring some baking and I brought the refreshments. After the show participants shared the food with the audience. The video of this records an almost festive atmosphere; parents proudly hug their children, friends of the performers 'high five' them, the performers move around the room proudly shouting across to each other as they receive further praises, laughter rings out from various areas of the room and groups of adults intermingle as individuals chat with each other. The audience stays in the room for at least an hour after the show.

If I were to take a key element from this, it was how welcome the use of food to signal the transition between the end of the performance and the start of the informal gathering was to the audience, acting as a reward for the performers for sharing their creation and a reward for the audience for caring to come and listen. It also provided an opportunity for families and friends, who may not have been familiar with each other, to mingle and share comments over a common event.

In terms of my attempt to use theatre for common ground, this part of the performance made me realise how important the informal gathering at the end of an event is to the creation of possible links between people from polyethnic and multi-cultural backgrounds. It gave me a glimpse to a utopian ideal similar to that expressed by Jill Dolan that:

The potential of different kinds of performance to inspire moments in which audiences feel themselves allied with each other, and with a broader, more capacious sense of a public, in which social discourse articulates the possible, rather than the insurmountable obstacles to human potential. (2005, 2)

I hoped that maybe this sense of community may continue outside the walls of this performance and positively influence the relationships among this group.

This chapter has detailed my own attempts to make sense of the theoretical and practical models that I researched in an effort to develop my own model of theatre for social purposes. It details my own journey from audience member to workshop participant and how I tested ideas for my proposed practical project. This search has been an extremely long and difficult process. Much of the learning has been experiential, and the essential problem with experiential learning is that those undergoing it are too busy doing it to reflect upon the process. Contact Community Theatre acted as a prototype for my proposed future model. I was fortunate enough to have this opportunity which helped me ‘road test’ so many key ideas.

I came to Boal’s Image Theatre later in my research than would have been ideal. Boal’s theories, along with those of Alistair Campbell and Hilary Halba, helped me to identify a number of critical errors in my early experiments, for example adapting the exercises in Boal’s Image Theatre in a way that promoted greater critical questioning of the images produced. By deepening my own reflection techniques I was able to ensure more effective critical questioning of the work created by the group.

By ensuring each exercise I delivered to the group was framed in such a way that it helped deepen their understanding of the work they created. These errors made me revisit the writings of my practitioner theorists, to understand how I had made my mistakes. It was only later, when I had some distance from my early experiments, that I was

able to link key elements to the writings of my practitioner theorists and from there draw out some principles for working. These principles, which I detail in chapter three, make up the model I propose to use for future workshops.

Chapter Three: Moving forward; creating an Ideal Model

This thesis records my journey from analysing the practical application of ideas presented by the practitioner-theorists I referenced in this thesis, to observing how an Expert Practitioner modelled the presentation of a workshop. It then describes how I attempted to develop my own theatrical experimentations and the problems I encountered.

This final chapter sets out the principles that have emerged from my various readings, experiences and experiments. It will then identify the exercises and processes that I found best aligned with these principles. I will then describe the way I might— ideally, utopianly— conduct a theatrical project that could— ideally, utopianly— create common ground amongst peoples from diverse social groups.

Principles

The choice of venue and its set-up is critical. Since no public or private space is fully neutral, the social significance of the space in which theatre work is to be conducted should be as open as possible to diverse groups. If, for example, a church hall is being used, the environment should be as clear of religious markers and the space as open as possible for reconfiguration by the participants themselves.

The first twenty minutes of a workshop must be carefully constructed, because the way participants meet each other and the leader, sets the tone for everything that follows. This means that the first exercise on the first day, in which introductions are to be performed, must be solid enough for people to get a sense of each other, but not so belaboured that by the time the actual work gets underway, people have lost interest.

Each subsequent session should have a set starting point, an exercise that brings participants together in a familiar way, before going on to more challenging exercises. Embodied learning is far more immersive and so further exercises are best if they explore ideas physically as well as verbally.

The role of the leader needs to be clearly established; neither too domineering nor too passive. This means the leader must demonstrate a respectful presence with all the participants. This includes maintaining eye contact, using active listening and being aware of appropriate proximity to the participants.

Participants need to feel a sense of investment in the work being created so they care about what is to be performed. This may be achieved by having longer workshop sessions, which will immerse participants in the culture of the group they are creating. Asking participants to share information about them self and encouraging them to offer ideas towards the final performance will support this sense of community.

The facilitator must acknowledge that each group of participants will approach their source material differently. Once the facilitator has negotiated the ground rules for working with that group, then they must respect that the scenes and performances created by the group stand as a reflection of the learning of that group.

All sources of material used must be treated with respect by participants, and this respect must be modelled by the leader. This includes developing a code of confidentiality between the workshop participants. It is important to establish respect and trust so that participants feel comfortable about sharing their thoughts and feelings about ethnic and cultural issues.

The process of reflection must be clearly established as an important tool in the development of Praxis, within the group. This means the leader must introduce techniques for reflection early in the workshop and reiterate their importance throughout subsequent sessions.

The end of each session needs to allow participants an opportunity to acknowledge the work that has taken place in the workshop whilst setting the tone for the next session. This may take the shape of some sort of ritual that participants come to recognise as a signal for the end of the meeting.

Having refreshments is an important social icebreaker in any situation; bringing it into a workshop provides further opportunities to

remind participants that they are part of a community and can socialise together.

Getting community involvement is essential to the success of the project, as long as this does not interfere with the creation of the dramatic liminal space. Involving family and friends in any way deepens the links that are formed by the group and helps extend the influence of the work.

Emphasising the need for punctuality is an important discipline. Punctuality acknowledges the value of fellow participants' time and encourages respect for the work created.

It is important that the atmosphere in the workshop is one where a sense of play is encouraged, because in my experience, participants learn best when they are having fun. It is important to remember that the term 'play' can include exercises that are intense and absorbing.

Techniques

This section details a number of exercises that I explored, some in theory and some experientially, which I felt offered the most potential for working to find common ground between diverse ethnic and cultural groups. I have split the exercises according to where I felt they were most appropriate in my workshop, in the ideal.

Introductory exercises

The introductory exercises I experienced and read about are:

Workshops that use intensive physical exercises to develop a sense of group, for example in *‘Inhlanzi Ishelwe Amanzi!! As Fish Out of Water: finding authentic voices in a multicultural student production’*, Hazel Barnes describes the workshop participants experienced, and how it focused solely on movement and physical technique:

the first emphasis was on working with the body. This included building group cohesion through physical exercises. The first 3 days were spent entirely on trust-building exercises and group work. It was interesting to see how quickly the group bonded through close physical cooperation before any sharing of feelings or experience was attempted. These exercises consisted of warm-ups, which were always group warm-ups, usually a variety of tag, and primarily involved cooperation but also included a competitive element. Other competitive games with a ludicrous or zany element were also developed. (Barnes, 1999, 165)

Peter O’Connor’s technique to develop a group I detailed in chapter one. He encouraged quick conversations between participants by explaining each member would be introducing their neighbour. He then maintained silent listening in the group to allow each participant an opportunity to introduce their neighbour whilst sitting in a circle. I think this activity is extremely useful to signal a

quieter tone to a workshop where respectful listening is required. For this reason I would not use this as a first activity, preferring to use it later on in my introductory session.

Of these, a fast-paced physical introduction that breaks down participants' feelings of self-consciousness, interspersed with moments of stillness and reflection seems best for my purposes. I believe that this combination signals clearly that the act of reflection is as important to the success of the workshop as the physical explorations.

In my practical experiments I have taken many exercises from Boal's work. The section '*Knowing the body*' in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1970, 126), is particularly useful for developing muscular awareness. The most invaluable source of ideas has come from his excellent book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992), which has an extensive range of exercises to develop physical awareness and group awareness. The exercise helped participants to deepen their understanding of Boal's Image Theatre.

Exploring ideas theatrically

I read and explored a number of practical exercises that helped participants generate material around issues that they wished to explore in greater depth. These include the labels exercise I outlined in Contact Community Theatre in Chapter Two.

While teaching in Ashburton College I used a simplified version of the following exercise described by Hilary Halba. It explains how participants share objects ‘that signified something about their identity – in whatever way they interpreted these provocations’ (2010, 30), from their own culture to create devised scenes within the workshop:

These objects provided a means by which questions to do with the articulation of personal and cultural identities could be filtered and interrogated. Students presented the objects to the group, entering into a dialogue with lecturers to do with people, places and things that come up in their description, thus unearthing stories and slightly unsettling any ‘pat’ anecdotalism that might be ‘set’ in their descriptions. The stories and ideas that emerged were then fed back into the devising process, providing a complex iteration of foci to do with identity. The people, places and things that emerged from the students’ stories were set down on huge sheets of newsprint paper, eventually making three comprehensive lists, from which students randomly chose items to form the basis of short improvisations. Students were reminded, however, that these stories belonged to their peers, and hence needed

to be honoured as the teller's own personal, familial
and cultural taonga (treasures). (30)

What I find most useful in this, is the link it shows between the
creation of abstract thoughts and ideas into actual performance pieces.
Her decision to make participants link seemingly random pieces
together introduces new possibilities around how participants see
identity. These new connections will help participants in their creation
of thought-provoking theatre. It is the creation of these new
connections that I would be particularly interested in bringing into my
future workshops.

Finally I wish to look at an exercise devised by Alistair Campbell,
which he describes in *Reinventing the wheel: Breakout Theatre-
Education*. In this exercise he explains how he has adapted Boal's
Image Theatre to provide a fast and intense range of images from
which to shape theatrical scenes that concern the participants.
Participants are placed in two circles with the outer group looking
inwards and the inner group facing them:

The Wheel makes these discoveries safe through the
reciprocal structure of a game or a dance (me first, now
you) and then takes them further. One half of the group
forms a circle facing outwards, the others forming a
larger circle around them facing inwards. Our original,
discrete pairs are still facing each other. Those in the

outer ring of the Wheel are always sculptors; the inner comprises a frieze of images. What it takes to operate the Wheel is the suggestion of an emotion (e.g., anger), or a professional type (e.g., teachers), or a place (e.g., England), which is swiftly molded by the outer ring [. . .] Through molding our partner, we often clarify what an emotion such as anger means to us [. . .] Now all we need to do is revolve the Wheel by having the outer ring walk around in silence, allowing the inner ring of images to build up like the frames in a magic lantern. By this stage in a session, it is usually possible to ask the group how they would like to use the Wheel next. We can, for example, swap the inner for the outer ring and mold a contrasting emotion or response to a set of sculptures, and again revolve the Wheel. (1994, 46)

I feel for the purposes of my workshop it would be most fruitful to combine the second and third exercises as they will provide the best opportunity for exploring the ideas generated by the participants in the greatest depth. This in turn will offer a wider range of creative opportunities.

Opportunities for reflection

As I have stated throughout this thesis, I feel that the reflection process must take an equal role in the development of ideas in a workshop. My experience in teaching has suggested that the use of a range of verbal feed-back methods as well as written techniques is the most effective combination.

One technique that has worked effectively as a closing ritual for each workshop was the ‘invisible verbal circle’. Everyone closed their eyes and then called out moments during the workshop that they felt made the most impact on them. Participants had to be specific to ensure everyone in the workshop knew which moment was being referred to. I am also interested in looking at a wider range of responses including, photographs, cartoons and verse. I believe that any response to the work can be used to deepen the range.

The utopian workshop

This brings me to my final section where I will imagine how I will set up and run my next project. As a result of my experiences I realise that most groups of people are too busy focussing on establishing and maintaining internal relationships within their own communities to consider the need to establish and maintain relationships with different communities. I will now describe the strategies I propose to use so that I can engage with different communities in a way that they might wish to work with each other:

Working with schools and charitable organisations, I have discovered that groups are happy to do theatre projects and have invited me in to work with them. As long as the participants trust me and are not too inhibited, they are willing to attempt most exercises; this demonstrates that it is not the theatre techniques that are the problem. Therefore if I want to use theatre as a platform for common ground, I will need to work within the interests of each separate group before I can develop the links between each group that may offer a workshop that can potentially bring members from the diverse groups together.

Using the connections I have developed with various schools and N.G.O.s, I will offer to teach a range of workshops that suit the individual requirements of diverse groups within the different communities. Once I have worked with a wide enough range of groups within the different communities, I will then invite representatives from all of these other groups to be part of an experimental workshop that looks at how theatre can be used as a way of creating common ground between diverse ethnic and cultural groups. I will contact local radio to advertise the project and contact the leaders of the communities to keep them informed.

In this way, the representatives in each group will share a core theatrical language and set of skills through me. They will also share an understanding of how the liminal space of theatre works. This common language will be the beginning of the start of conversations through theatre. Participants will also share sets of expectations of how the workshops will operate from working with me. These expectations will include:

- An understanding of appropriate dress to wear for practical exercises.
- The importance of punctuality.
- That each session will start with everyone seated in a circle.
- There will always be a greeting and sharing of thoughts at the beginning of each workshop
- The workshop will begin with twenty minutes of warm-up exercises before exploring further themes
- After two hours there will be a break for refreshments, and each participant is invited to bring some food or drink to share
- There will be a time to share songs and stories at some stage
- Further exploration work will require full participation in a non-judgemental atmosphere
- Reflective practice will be ongoing with participants expected to share their reflections about the previous session's work.
- There will always be a closing ritual that signals the end of the formal workshop process.

By doing this I will have provided each group with a similar theatrical vocabulary which they can continue to further develop. This vocabulary will provide the framework for common ground as they share a common theatrical language,

This way, I am also guiding them towards self governance. Having been taught in this manner, they should continue expanding their sense of group (with my guidance) until ideally, utopianly, I can step back, enabling them to work together without me. By working in this way, they will learn to

discover themselves more clearly and, through learning about themselves, see each other more clearly. Unlike Jill Dolan, who sees theatre as a utopia based on a moment in time, I see it in the multiplicity around storytelling and songs.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis I observed that there was a high degree of alienation between different cultural groups within the township of Ashburton. This was particularly evident between many members of the dominant white culture and likewise, the diverse cultural and ethnic groups who had recently moved to this small semi-rural community.

I wanted to find ways of bringing them together into a new sense of communality and I imagined that I would be able to do this by creating a theatre workshop in a community. In this workshop I envisaged young people from diverse ethnic and cultural groups coming together to explore their perceptions about cultural identities within the larger culture of New Zealand. I then hoped they would create a performance that reconfirmed their own sense of identity while exploring new cultural identities within the performance group.

The reality has been far more complex and challenging than I could have ever anticipated. This thesis has been just as much a record of my failures as much as my successes during my own journey of exploration.

I drew inspiration for this thesis from the theories of Freire, in particular his definition of cultural synthesis:

The learners' capacity for critical knowing—well beyond mere opinion—is established in the process of unveiling their relationships with the historical-cultural world in and with which they exist. (35)

The practical research was an attempt to use 'critical knowing' as the basis for engaging the predominantly white culture with the various cultural and ethnic groups in the community.

Using the theories of such practitioners as Boal and Heathcote, I experimented to explore the issues I raised and then discussed the results in the thesis. From these results I explained why theatre is particularly suited to providing a platform where such critical thinking can develop.

Referencing the work of the practitioner theorist Boal, I also explored how the combination of theatre and critical thinking could develop theatre that offered the possibility of social change in small communities such as Ashburton. The work of Moreno around the fluidity of identity supported the possibility that such critical thinking could lead to the creation of common ground amongst a group of people from diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

The performance by Contact Community Theatre did receive a very positive response from the audience. This audience comprised of a mixture of new migrants and second generation migrants, and people who referred to themselves as 'locals'. The audience was small, numbering less than fifty, but as Jill Dolan suggests:

performing across cultural identities in the formalised space of theatre might provoke utopian performatives that offer glimpses of how people might be together in a more respectful, care-full, loving human community, however small or large those configurations might be. (2005, 64)

It could be argued that the performance was successful; it created a setting where some common ground was shared amongst the audience. It also created the opportunity of developing further community theatre work amongst the members of the theatre group.

Through this journey I have learned that diversity means many things, not always about a white middle class semi rural community responding to other cultural and ethnic coming into their community, but can mean differing age groups and views regarding the purpose of theatre. It can mean working with wealthy students who need to appreciate what it means to live in poverty. It can mean working with poor students who need to learn how to work together for a shared goal.

I have also learned that you cannot assume that the sense of community in a school is the same as a sense of community in the wider community, even if it includes the same people. I have come to understand the importance of the incidental rituals around preparing a rehearsal room, giving lifts to the performers and sharing food together in the creation of a group identity.

I have learned that what seems simple when reading an idea in theory does not always make it easy to apply, and just because something seems fun to do in practice, does not always mean it is theoretically sound. For example, understanding the complexity of the role I play as a practitioner in relation to the workshops developed and the people attending them has been problematic.

I finally understand the enormity of the role and Boal's reference to the Joker Boal as, 'magical, omniscient, polymorphous and ubiquitous' (182). If I am suggesting cultures created in a group can be fluid and open to change, so too the responses of the practitioner must also be open to the changing dynamics within each group. The practitioner needs to maintain a balancing act between acknowledging these changing relationships and offering opportunities for critical thinking to the group.

In the process I have learned to question how theatre works: That theatre demands the presence of people. That theatre is always a communal act. Theatre is about storytelling and sharing. That if these new stories are to have an impact in creating common ground they need to be shared repeatedly.

I have begun to look at culture not as some linear continuum, but rather like stones dropped in a pool, where ripples bounce across the surface causing eddies and counter ripples, in constant motion, making new connections. Perhaps one or more of these connections may help to prevent a community reaching a crisis point?

Finally I have learned that simply wanting to be ‘good and worthy’ does not make people want to come to your workshop, as you can still end up in a corner on your own drinking cups of tea.

Appendix

Contact Community Theatre

Performance Script: Can You Hear Me?

Performed 23rd June 2010

At Base Youth Venue

Ashburton, NZ

Script developed by Contact Community Theatre members and
scribed by Diane Duprés.

Performers

Janice

Natasha

Helene (referred to as Helz in the script)

Ranga

Anni

Malakai

Prep the room

Scene One: Mala's Teacup

All gather on stage, looking at photos, talking to friends, listening to music. Helz comes in with flip board.

Helz: OK! Good! Everyone here? Head count! *All jump up and move to stage* - Good. Can we go through the props then? Hammer?

Natasha: Check.

Helz: Whistle.

Janice: Check.

Helz: Chair.

Mala: Check.

Helz: Cushion.

Anni: Check.

Helz: Table.

Janice: Check.

Helz: Sunglasses.

Janice: Check. *(comes over to Duprés and they discuss the order of events)*

Helz: Mug

Natasha: Check.

Helz: Anything else?

Ranga: Tea cup?

Helz: Oh yes oops! Teacup (writes on pad) sorry forgot! Ready to start? Good

(*reads from script*) Hello and welcome everybody, thank you for coming a special welcome to. . . (*looks up*) Who do I have to welcome? Anyone?

Ranga: (*stage whisper*) Mr Bum scratcher

Helz: So thank you for coming (*Name*). . . To celebrate our first performance we are using the themes of family and Teacups. Is that all right (*to group*) was that clear? I'm a bit worried about my accent, it's quite pommie.

Ranga: Just shout at them, that helps them understand.

Mala: So Mala's Teacup, whose playing me?

Ranga: Me! I will, Me!

Mala: OK!, so we need a kitchen shelf - I look round.

Natasha: Oh! I could stand on this table (*brings over table*) holding the cup.

Mala: Good! Where's the cup?

Ranga: Here!

Mala: Thank you, so you love this cup (*kisses cup*) and you have always wanted to get at this cup.

Ranga: Why?

Mala: Because it's so colourful and because you are not allowed to touch it. So, mum is in the kitchen. (*looks around*)

Anni: I'll be mum. (*makes curvy gestures*)

Mala: Thanks – So you are in the kitchen.

Anni: Right! What am I doing?

Mala: I don't know – mum stuff! – And then you leave to...

Anni: (*interrupts*) Why?

Mala: To do mum stuff somewhere else - I don't know, (*fingers to head*) just make something up!

Anni: Well It's your story

Mala: Yes and I can't remember !

Anni: Not a very good story then is it? If it was my story I'd know exactly what it was (*continue to ramble until Mala interrupts*). . .

Mala: (*interrupts glaring, really exasperated*) So mum -

Anni: That's me!

Mala: Yes, that's you, mum leaves and you reach for the cup.

(*Reaches up*)

Mala: No not like that on a chair, (*looks for a chair, which is brought over by Janice*) –Janice: Wait! I got it

Mala: thank you – on this chair and you reach up.

Ranga: I reach up –

Mala: – And you drop the cup accidentally and it smashes.

Helz: You're not smashing my cup! (*snatches cup away*)

Mala: But that's what happens!

Helz: I don't care! I've only got two and you're not smashing that one.

Ranga: I could drop it really gently so it doesn't smash. (*shows in slow motion*)

Helz: Are you sure?

Janice: Well look it's landing on carpet.

Mala: So it won't smash? No, it won't smash...well it shouldn't smash...well it might smash.

Natasha: Lets just try it can we? I'm getting a bit bored stuck up here with nothing to do.

Mala: Well you drop it.

(*All look up*)

Helz: That's very high.

Janice: I know we could put a cushion underneath here, look there's one in the box.

(*Drops it on to the cushion, everyone looks at it as it lands on the cushion*)

Helz: Not very theatrical is it?

Natasha: No, Not much shock value.

Anni: I know (*runs to box*) I could smash (*looks round*) this old mug with this hammer when you drop the tea cup! (big OTT movements)

Natasha: Ooooh! I wanna smash please can I smash it please I really wanna smash the mug I wanna.

Anni: Ok! Then we swap.

Natasha: Yes!

Mala: Start from the beginning – so Mala and mum are in the kitchen,
when mum leaves the kitchen and (*as Ranga begins to reach up*)

Janice: Stop! How will you know that Ranga Has dropped it?

Natasha: I'll see them.

Janice: You're way over there.

Natasha: I could come closer?

Janice: I could signal her like this. (*waves her hands*)

Mala: Nice! (*nods his head*) OK! Restart – so Mala and mum are in
the kitchen and Mala has been eyeing up this teacup, when mum
leaves the kitchen and Mala - (*Ranga jumps up to try and reach the
teacup*)

Natasha: Stop!

Mala: What now?

Natasha: How will I see your signal?

Janice: Have we got anything to make a noise?

Helz: Oh, Oh I have a whistle! Look!

Ranga: OK! Lets Try it!

(*Whistles*)

Mala: You all heard that OK?

(*Everyone nods, some are grimacing, one has fingers in the ears*)

Mala: OK! Lets start again -

Ranga: Stop! The chair! It's really wobbly! Can someone hold it?

Jancie: I will!

Mala: OK! From the top so mum and Mala are -

Helz: – Hold on!

Mala: Yesss! (*hands up*)

Helz: That hammer, (*pulls hammer out of Natasha's hands*) I need an OSH form in case she has an accident!

Natasha: What kind of accident? (*snatches hammer back*) I'm hitting a mug with a hammer.

Helz: Well you could – hit your thumb! (*snatches it back*)

Anni: Ohh! I know - (*cut off by Helz*)

Helz: Yes! I don't have a form for that! We're not covered!

Anni: Wait we haven't done my line!

Helz: Yes you did!

Anni: No you interrupted me!

Helz: Well there was a big pause, which I thought was the end of your line.

Anni: Can we do it again then?

Helz: OK! Go!

Anni: Oh I know - a shard could go in your eye and you'd be blinded for life (*imitates being blind*)

Helz: Yes! I don't have a form for that! We're not covered!

Natasha: How about I wear my sunglasses then?

Helz: OK! But don't hit your thumb

Natasha: I won't! (*snatches hammer back*)

Mala: OK! Are we finally ready?

All: Yes!

Mala: Are you sure?

All: Yes!

Mala: So one day when I was really small, about four or five I loved this teacup that mum kept on the top shelf in the kitchen, it was so pretty. So one day mum and I are in the kitchen and as soon as she leaves me alone I make a beeline for this teacup. Of course it's too high up for me so I get a chair and I'm still too short, so I jump up and reach the cup, but I lose my balance and the cup falls and smashes! I hear mum coming back in and I know I'm in big trouble so I run away and hide under the bed – and that's exactly how it happened!

Transitions

Ranga – ‘The baboon with the big red bottom’

Scene Two: Lost in clothing

Each person has two lines to say in a range of languages: that means putting clothes on Ranga.

Janice: *cardi* (English) Work hard and then you can enjoy life!

Anni: *glove* (German) Have you cleaned your teeth?

Helz: *scarf* (Japanese) Do your homework

Mala: *short wrap around skirt* (Fijian) Why can't you be more like your cousin?

Janice: *glove* (Hindi) Don't be on the computer all night

Anni: *shoe* (German) Have you tidied your room?

Mala: *coat* (Fijian) Don't speak to me like that!

Natasha: *hat* (English) Behave!

Anni: *shoe* (German) Have a proper wash!

Helz: *hat* (Japanese) Have you combed your hair?

Natasha: *long wrap around skirt* (English) You can't go out like that!

Anni: *scarf* (German) What do you mean you don't know?

Until Ranga has completely disappeared in all the clothes

Janice comes on as her Grandmother, talking quietly she takes all the clothes away until Ranga is herself again – and Janice says, in

English, 'Why there you are!'

Transitions

Janice – ‘Twinkle, Twinkle’ leave

Helz continue it, then Anni hum it.

Scene Three: Chicken

Anni is cleaning the house ready and then someone knocks at the door
Anni, Mala and Janice are on the sofa all talking. Natasha is seated
separately. As the scene progresses, the women occasionally they
pause and say Natasha! Then all laugh. After each comment there is a
slight freeze frame where Natasha speaks.

Cue > Janice opens her phone

Quiet One: Have you noticed how mum's talk about you as if you are
not there?

Mums unfreeze and begin to talk about Natasha.

Cue> 'Natasha' said together and laughing

Quiet Two: Sometimes they don't even listen to each other

All get out their cell phones and talk to the phones, occasionally look
at each other but still talking to the person on the phone.

Cue> Mala says 'Justin Bieber fan'

Quiet Three: If you listen they start to sound Just like chickens.

Women gradually begin to talk like chickens then move like chickens,
one sitting on the sofa, the others scratching and pecking and ruffling
their feathers.

Natasha herds them off the stage. Shoos them off then shuts the door

Natasha: Phew! Mums these days!

Transitions

Helene— ‘Do do ti baba’

Scene Four Can you hear me?

Members in pairs set up around the performance space to perform ‘Clayman’ exercise. Helz to stand on stage alone at cue. Speaks at moments near the end of the physical exercise. Others do not react but continue slow, careful movements.

Helz: Hello? Hello mum? It’s me can you hear me mum?

- Mum I just wanted to tell you .
- I just wanted you to know.
- That I.
- That I.
- Mum?
- Are you there?

Scene Five: A long way away

Mala on stage with a tape recorder, he puts in a tape and we hear an old lady's voice, it is his grandmother. All the way through is the sound of Grandma drinking tea, putting cup on the saucer e.t.c...

[note Grandma speaks the following has been translated]

Grandma: Hello Mala? It's Mala, I am so pleased you called, how are you my child?

Mala: Hello Grandma, I'm glad you are pleased to hear from me. I'm fine how are you?

Grandma: I miss you, it's so nice having you phone me

Mala: I miss you too Grandma - I would call you more but it costs too much, why don't you get skype or something?

Grandma: What is skype? Oh new technology! No! When I was young it was so different.

Mala: (*joking*) I am sure things were very different when you were young Grandma. Hey did they even have electricity back then?

Grandma: (*sharp*) Don't be cheeky boy if I had spoken to my elders like that I would be beaten with a stick!

Mala: Sorry Grandma. You are right and please don't beat me with a stick eh? Did you get the new photos mum sent?

Grandma: Yes I did you look so handsome just like your father when he was young and you have got taller?

Mala: Really you think I look like my father when he was a young man – that’s cool – but No I haven’t grown much at all recently

Grandma: (*worried*) Are you eating enough?

Mala: Yes I’m eating enough but I miss your cooking!

Grandma: I knew it you are not eating properly. When you come back to Fiji, when you come I’ll cook this tasty curry for you, come early so there is plenty for you.

Mala: I can’t come for a quite a while Grandma, Dad says it costs too much and things are still not right over there for us and I’m doing well at school. But man it’s bloody cold here ay?

Grandma: Don’t swear! You are picking up some bad habits in that place! (*sighs*) I miss you it’s so nice having you phone me

Mala: I miss you too Grandma – sorry about the swearing, what I meant to say was how’s the weather over there?

Grandma: It’s too hot in Fiji

Mala: If it’s too hot then come to New Zealand grandma!

Grandma: Ah! It’s too cold in New Zealand!

Mala: Too cold huh? That’s true did I tell you it’s bl -

Grandma: - BOY! DON’T YOU DARE

Mala: Just teasing.

Grandma: But the rain, you know it has rained for a whole week with no break!

Mala: And the rain, yeah we get a lot here too.

Grandma: Did you get my parcel? I saw them and thought of you

(Mala brings out socks that have spiderman logos on them)

Mala: I love them thank you

Grandma: I miss you its so nice having you phone me

Mala: I miss you too Grandma.

Grandma cries

Mala: I miss you too Grandma.

Transitions

Anni – ‘Sweet little child’

Everyone slowly comes and joins her on stage in a semi-circle, ready to start Scene Six

Scene Six

Helz: OK final section.

Janice: What is?

Helz: This is?

Ranga: So what do we do now?

Helz: Now we do the singing and then we feed them who remembered to bring food?

Hands up

Various: I'm doing Friday.

- And me!

- Oh me too!

Helz: Mum's making scones again.

Mala: (*reading his Womans Day magazine again, looks up*) Is that it?

Anni: It's a bit short! I don't think that was an hour?

Helz: It was in places –it's our first one, we'll get longer as we go – beside we're only charging them a gold coin what do they expect?

Ranga: And they get food!

Mala: We get to eat it too right?

All: Mala!

Sing: Frère Jaques - once altogether line up and bow 2mins

French x 2- *Sonnez les matines!* and start to pack away

German version

English version

Then start with Fijian x 2 all come together for the bow

PROPS

Scene 1

Whistle

Hammer

Tea cup

Mug

Sunglasses

Flipboard

Cushion

Scene 2

2 scarves

1 coat

1 cardigan/jacket

1 pair gloves

1 pair shoes

2 hats

2 skirts – one long and one short

Scene 3

3 mobile phones

3 teacups

Scene 5

Spiderman socks

Tape recorder/Pc to play CD.

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